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THE

WORKS

Of the Most Reverend

Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON,

LATE

Lord Archbiſhop of CANTERBURY,

IN TEN VOLUMES.

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SER-

SERMON CXLIII.

The goodneſs of God.

PSAL. cxlv. 9.

The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

THE ſubject which I have now propoſed to treat of, is certainly one of the greateſt and nobleſt arguments in the world, the goodneſs of God; the higheſt and moſt glorious perfection of the beſt and moſt excellent of beings, than which nothing deſerves more to be conſidered by us, nor ought in reaſon to affect us more. The goodneſs of God is the cauſe, and the continuance of our beings, the foundation of our hopes, and the foundation of our happineſs, our greateſt comfort, and our faireſt example, the chief object of our love, and praiſe, and admiration, the joy and rejoicing of our hearts; and therefore the meditation and diſcourſe of it muſt needs be pleaſant and delightful to us; the great difficulty will be, to confine ourſelves upon ſo copious an argument, and to ſet bounds to that which is of ſo vaſt an extent; *The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.*

Which words are an argument, which the divine Pſalmiſt uſeth, to ſtir up himſelf and others to the praiſe of God: At the third verſe, he tells us, that *the Lord is great, and greatly to be praiſed;* and he gives the reaſon of this, verſe 8. and 9. from thoſe properties and perfections of the divine nature, which declare his goodneſs; *The Lord is gracious, and full of compaſſion, ſlow to anger, and of great mercy: The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works:* where we have the goodneſs of God declared, together with

the amplitude and extent of it, in reſpect of the objects of it; *The Lord is good to all.*

In the handling of this argument, I ſhall do theſe four things:

Firſt, Conſider what is the proper notion of goodneſs, as it is attributed to God.

Secondly, Shew that this perfection belongs to God.

Thirdly, Conſider the effects and the extent of it.

Fourthly, Anſwer ſome objections which may ſeem to contradict and bring in queſtion the goodneſs of God.

Firſt, What is the proper notion of goodneſs, as it is attributed to God.

There is a dry metaphyſical notion of goodneſs, which only ſignifies the being and eſſential properties of a thing: but this is a good word ill beſtowed; for, in this ſenſe, every thing that hath being, even the devil himſelf, is good.

And there is a moral notion of goodneſs: and that is two-fold:

1. More general, in oppoſition to all moral evil and imperfection, which we call ſin and vice; and ſo the juſtice, and truth, and holineſs of God, are in this ſenſe his goodneſs. But there is,

2. Another notion of moral goodneſs, which is more particular and reſtrained; and then it denotes a particular virtue, in oppoſition to a particular vice; and this is the proper and uſual acceptation of the word goodneſs; and the beſt deſcription I can give of it is this, that it is a certain propenſion and diſpoſition of mind, whereby a perſon is inclined to deſire and procure the happineſs of others; and it is beſt underſtood by its contrary, which is an envious diſpoſition, a contracted and narrow ſpirit, which would confine happineſs to itſelf, and grudgeth that others ſhould partake of it, or ſhare in it; or, a malicious and miſchievous temper, which delights in the harms of others, and to procure trouble and miſchief to them. To communicate and lay out ourſelves for the good of others, is goodneſs; and ſo the Apoſtle explains doing good, by communicating to others, who are in miſery, or in want. Heb. xiii. 16. *But to do good, and to communicate, forget not.* The Jews made a diſtinction between a righteous and a good man; to

which

which the Apoſtle alludes, Rom. v. 7. *Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man ſome would even dare to die.* The righteous man was he that did no wrong to others; and the good man, he who was not only not injurious to others, but kind and beneficial to them. So that goodneſs is a readineſs and diſpoſition to communicate the good and happineſs which we enjoy, and to be willing others ſhould partake of it.

This is the notion of goodneſs among men; and it is the ſame in God, only with this difference, that God is originally and tranſcendently good: but the creatures are, the beſt of them, but imperfectly good, and by derivation from God, who is the fountain and original of goodneſs; which is the meaning of our Saviour, Luke xviii. 19. when he ſays, *There is none good ſave one, that is, God.* But though the degrees of goodneſs in God, and the creatures, be infinitely unequal, and that goodneſs which is in us be ſo ſmall and inconſiderable, that, compared with the goodneſs of God, it does not deſerve that name; yet the eſſential notion of goodneſs in both muſt be the ſame; elſe, when the ſcripture ſpeaks of the goodneſs of God, we could not know the meaning of it; and if we do not at all underſtand what it is for God to be good, it is all one to us, for ought we know, whether he be good or not; for he may be ſo, and we never the better for it, if we do not know what goodneſs in God is, and conſequently when he is ſo, and when not.

Beſides that the goodneſs of God is very frequently in ſcripture propounded to our imitation; but it is impoſſible for us to imitate that, which we do not underſtand what it is: From whence it is certain, that the goodneſs which we are to endeavour after, is the ſame that is in God; becauſe in this we are commanded to imitate the perfection of God, that is, to be good and merciful, as he is, according to the rate and condition of creatures, and ſo far as we, whoſe natures are imperfect, are capable of reſembling the divine goodneſs.

Thus much for the notion of goodneſs in God; it is a propenſion and diſpoſition in the divine nature, to communicate being and happineſs to his creatures.

Secondly, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, in the next place, that this perfection of goodneſs belongs to God; and that from theſe three heads,

1. From the acknowledgment of natural light.

2. From the teſtimony of ſcripture, and divine revelation. And,

3. From the perfection of the divine nature.

I. From the acknowledgments of natural light. The generality of the Heathens agree in it, and there is hardly any perfection of God more univerſally acknowledged by them. I always except the ſect of the Epicureans, who attribute nothing but eternity and happineſs to the divine nature; and yet if they would have conſidered it, happineſs without goodneſs is impoſſible. I do not find that they do expreſly deny this perfection to God, or that they aſcribe to him the contrary; but they clearly take away all the evidence and arguments of the divine goodneſs; for they ſuppoſed God to be an immortal and happy being, that enjoyed himſelf, and had no regard to any thing without himſelf, that neither gave being to other things, nor concerned himſelf in the happineſs or miſery of any of them; ſo that their notion of a deity was, in truth, the proper notion of an idle being, that is called god, and neither does good nor evil.

But, ſetting aſide this atheiſtical ſect, the reſt of the Heathens did unanimouſly affirm and believe the goodneſs of God; and this was the great foundation of their religion; and all their prayers to God, and praiſes of him, did neceſſarily ſuppoſe a perſuaſion of the divine goodneſs. Whoſoever prays to God, muſt have a perſuaſion or good hopes of his readineſs to do him good; and to praiſe God, is to acknowledge that he hath received good from him. Seneca hath an excellent paſſage to this purpoſe; "He, ſays he, that denies the "goodneſs of God, does not, ſurely, conſider the infi- "nite number of prayers that, with hands lifted up to "heaven, are put up to God, both in private and pu- "blick; which certainly would not be, nor is it credi- "ble, that all mankind ſhould conſpire in this madneſs "of putting up their ſupplications to deaf and impo- "tent deities, if they did not believe that the gods

"were

" were ſo good as to confer benefits upon thoſe who " prayed to them."

But we need not infer their belief of God's goodneſs from the acts of their devotion, nothing being more common among them than expreſly to attribute this perfection of goodneſs to him; and among the divine titles, this always had the pre-eminence, both among the Greeks and Romans; εὖς τε μέγας τε, *Deus optimus maximus*, was their conſtant ſtile; and in our language, the name of God ſeems to have been given him from his goodneſs. I might produce innumerable paſſages out of the heathen authors to this purpoſe, but I ſhall only mention that remarkable one out of Seneca; *Primus deorum cultus eſt deos credere; deinde reddere illis majeſtatem ſuam, reddere bonitatem, ſine qua nulla majeſtas:* " The firſt act of worſhip is, to believe the be- " ing of God; and the next, to aſcribe majeſty or " greatneſs to him; and to aſcribe goodneſs, without " which there can be no greatneſs."

II. From the teſtimony of ſcripture and divine revelation. I ſhall mention but a few of thoſe many texts of ſcripture, which declare to us the goodneſs of God. Exod. xxxiv. 6. where God makes his name known to Moſes; *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth.* Pſal. lxxxvi. 5. *Thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive.* Pſal. cxix. 68. *Thou art good, and doſt good.* And that which is ſo often repeated in the book of Pſalms; *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever.* Our bleſſed Saviour attributes this perfection to God, in ſo peculiar and tranſcendent a manner, as if it were incommunicable: Luke x. 19. *There is none good, ſave one, that is God.* The meaning is, that no creature is capable of it, in that excellent and tranſcendent degree, in which the divine nature is poſſeſſed of it.

To the ſame purpoſe are thoſe innumerable teſtimonies of ſcripture, which declare God to be gracious and merciful, and long ſuffering; for theſe are but ſeveral branches of his goodneſs. His grace is the freeneſs of his goodneſs to thoſe who have not deſerved it: His mercy is his goodneſs to thoſe who are in miſery: His

patience is his goodneſs to thoſe who are guilty, in deferring the puniſhment due to them.

III. The goodneſs of God may likewiſe be argued from the perfection of the divine nature, theſe two ways:

1. Goodneſs is the chief of all perfections, and therefore it belongs to God.

2. There are ſome footſteps of it in the creatures, and therefore it is much more eminently in God.

1ſt, Goodneſs is the higheſt perfection, and therefore it muſt needs belong to God, who is the moſt perfect of beings. Knowledge and power are great perfections; but, ſeparated from goodneſs, they would be great imperfections, nothing but craft and violence. An angel may have knowledge and power in a great degree; but yet, for all that be a devil. Goodneſs is ſo great and neceſſary a perfection, that, without it, there can be no other; it gives perfection to all other excellencies. Take away this, and the greateſt excellencies in any other kind, would be but the greateſt imperfections: And therefore our Saviour ſpeaks of the goodneſs and mercy of God, as the ſum of his perfections; what one Evangeliſt hath. *Be ye merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful*, is rendered in another, *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*. Goodneſs is ſo eſſential to a perfect being, that if we once ſtrip God of this property, we rob him of the glory of all his other perfections; and therefore, when Moſes deſired to ſee God's glory, he ſaid, *He would make all his goodneſs paſs before him*, Exod. xxxiii. 19. This is the moſt amiable perfection, and as it were, the beauty of the divine nature: Zech. ix. 17. *How great is his goodneſs, and how great is his beauty!* Sine bonitate, nulla majeſtas, *without goodneſs, there can be no majeſty.* Other excellencies may cauſe fear and amazement in us; but nothing but goodneſs can command ſincere love and veneration.

2dly, There are ſome footſteps of this perfection in the creatures, and therefore it muſt be much more eminently in God. There is in every creature ſome repreſentation of ſome divine perfection or other; but God doth not own any creature to be *after his image*, that

that is deſtitute of goodneſs. The creatures that want reaſon and underſtanding are incapable of this moral goodneſs we are ſpeaking of; man is the firſt in the rank of creatures that is endowed with it, and he is ſaid to be *made after the image of God, and to have dominion given him over the creatures below him;* to ſignify to us, that if man had not been made after God's image, in reſpect of goodneſs, he had been unfit to rule over other creatures: Becauſe, without goodneſs, dominion would be tyranny and oppreſſion; and the more any creature partakes of this perfection of goodneſs, the more it reſembles God; as the bleſſed angels, who *behold the face of God continually*, and are thereby *tranſformed into his image, from glory to glory*, their whole buſineſs and employment is, to do good; and the devil though he reſembles God in other perfections of knowledge and power, yet becauſe he is evil, and envious, and miſchievous, and ſo contrary to God in this perfection, he is the moſt oppoſite and hateful to him of all creatures whatſoever.

And if this perfection be in ſome degree in the creature, it is much more in God; if it be derived from him, he is much more eminently poſſeſſed of it himſelf. All that goodneſs which is in the beſt natured of the ſons of men, or in the moſt glorious angels of heaven, is but an imperfect and weak repreſentation of the divine goodneſs.

The *third* thing I propoſed to conſider, was, the effects of the divine goodneſs together with the large extent of it, in reſpect of the objects of it: *The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works: thou art good, and doſt good*, ſays David, Pſal. cxix. 68. The great evidence and demonſtration of God's goodneſs, is from the effects of it. To the ſame purpoſe St. Paul ſpeaks, Acts xiv. 7. *He hath not left himſelf without witneſs, in that he doth good, and ſends us rain from heaven, and fruitful ſeaſons.*

I ſhall conſider the effects of the divine goodneſs, under theſe two heads:

1. The univerſal extent of God's goodneſs to all his creatures.

2. I

2. I ſhall conſider more particularly the goodneſs of God to men, which we are more eſpecially concerned to take notice of.

I. The univerſal extent of his goodneſs to the whole creation; *The Lord is good to all.* The whole creation furniſheth us with clear evidences and demonſtrations of the divine goodneſs; which way ſoever we caſt our eyes we are encountered with undeniable inſtances of the goodneſs of God; and every thing that we behold, is a ſenſible demonſtration of it: *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy-work*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xix. 1. And again, Pſal. xxxiii. 5. *The earth is full of the goodneſs of the Lord.* The whole frame of this world, and every creature in it, and all the ſeveral degrees of being and perfection, which are in the creatures, and the providence of God towards them all in the preſervation of them, and providing for the happineſs of all of them in ſuch degrees as they are capable of it, are a plentiful demonſtration of the divine goodneſs, which I ſhall endeavour to illuſtrate in theſe four particulars.

1. The univerſal goodneſs of God appears, in giving being to ſo many creatures.

2. In making them all ſo very good; conſidering the variety, and order, and end of them.

3. In his continual preſervation of them.

4. In providing ſo abundantly for the welfare and happineſs of all of them, ſo far as they are capable and ſenſible of it.

1ſt, The extent of God's goodneſs appears, in giving being to ſo many creatures. And this is a pure effect of goodneſs, to impart and communicate being to any thing. Had not God been good, but of an envious, and narrow, and contracted nature, he would have confined all being to himſelf, and been unwilling that any thing beſides himſelf ſhould have been; but his goodneſs prompted him to ſpread and diffuſe himſelf, and ſet his power and wiſdom on work, to give being to all that variety of creatures which we ſee and know to be in the world, and probably, to infinite more than we have the knowledge of. Now, it is not imaginable that God could have any other motive to do this, but purely

the

the goodneſs of his nature. All the motives imaginable beſides this, muſt either be indigency and want, or conſtraint and neceſſity; but neither of theſe can have any place in God; and therefore it was mere goodneſs that moved him to give being to other things: and therefore all creatures have reaſon, with the four and twenty elders in the Revelations, *to caſt their crowns before the throne of God, ſaying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou haſt created all things, and for thy pleaſure* (that is, of mere goodneſs) *they are, and were created.*

1. Indigency and want can have no place in God; becauſe he that hath all poſſible perfection, hath all plenty in himſelf; from whence reſults all-ſufficiency, and compleat happineſs. So that the divine nature need not look out of itſelf for happineſs, being incapable of any addition to the happineſs and perfection it is already poſſeſſed of: *Ipſa ſuis pollens opibus, nihil indiga noſtri.* We make things for our uſe, houſes to ſhelter us, and cloaths to keep us warm; and we propagate our kind, to perpetuate ourſelves in our poſterity: but all this ſuppoſeth imperfection, and want, and mortality; to none of which the divine nature is liable and obnoxious.

Nay, it was not want of glory which made God to make the world. It is true indeed, the glory of God's goodneſs doth herein appear, and creatures endowed with underſtanding have reaſon to take notice of it with thankfulneſs, praiſe and admiration: but there is no happineſs redounds to God from it, nor does he feed himſelf with any imaginary content and ſatisfaction, ſuch as vain glorious perſons have, from the fluttering applauſe of their creatures and beneficiaries. God is really *above all bleſſing and praiſe.* It is great condeſcenſion and goodneſs in him, to accept of our acknowledgments of his benefits, of our imperfect praiſes, and ignorant admiration of him; and were he not as wonderfully good, as he is great and glorious, he would not ſuffer us to ſully his great and glorious name, by taking it into our mouths; and were it not for our advantage and happineſs to own and acknowledge his benefits for any real happineſs and glory that comes to him

him by it, he could well enough be without it, and diſpenſe with us for ever entertaining one thought of him; and were it not for his goodneſs, might deſpiſe the praiſes of his creatures, with infinitely more reaſon than wiſe men do the applauſe of fools. There is, indeed, one text of ſcripture which ſeems to intimate, that God made all creatures for himſelf, as if he had ſome need of them, Prov. xvi. 4. *The Lord hath made all things for himſelf; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.* Now, if by God's *making all things for himſelf*, be meant, that he aimed at and intended the manifeſtation of his wiſdom, and power, and goodneſs in the creation of the world, it is moſt true, that, in this ſenſe, *he made all things for himſelf:* but if we underſtand it ſo, as if the goodneſs of his nature did not move him thereto, but he had ſome deſign to ſerve ends and neceſſities of his own upon his creatures, this is far from him. But it is very probable, that neither of theſe are the meaning of this text, which may be rendered, with much better ſenſe, and nearer to the Hebrew, thus, *God hath ordained every thing to that which is fit for it, and the wicked hath he ordained for the day of evil*; that is, the wiſdom of God hath fitted one thing to another, puniſhment to ſin, the evil day to the evil doers.

2. Nor can neceſſity and conſtraint have any place in God. When there was no creature yet made, nothing in being but God himſelf, there could be nothing to compel him to make any thing, and to extort from him the effects of his bounty; neither are the creatures neceſſary effects and emanations from the being of God, flowing from the divine eſſence, as water doth from a ſpring, and as light ſtreams from the ſun: if ſo, this indeed would have been an argument of the fulneſs of the divine nature, but not of the bounty and goodneſs of it; and it would have been matter of joy to us that we are, but not a true ground of thankfulneſs from us to God; as we rejoice, and are glad, that the ſun ſhines, but we do not give it any thanks for ſhining, becauſe it ſhines without any intention or deſign to do us good; it doth not know that we are the better for its light, nor did

did intend we ſhould be; and therefore we have no reaſon to acknowledge its goodneſs to us.

But God, who is a ſpirit endowed with knowledge and underſtanding, does not act as natural and material cauſes do, which act neceſſarily and ignorantly; whereas he acts knowingly and voluntarily, with particular intention and deſign, knowing that he does good, and intending to do ſo freely, and out of choice, and when he hath no other conſtraint upon him but this, that his goodneſs inclines his will to communicate himſelf to do good: ſo that the divine nature is under no neceſſity, but ſuch as is conſiſtent with the moſt perfect liberty, and freeſt choice.

Not but that goodneſs is eſſential to God, and a neceſſary perfection of his nature, and he cannot poſſibly be otherwiſe than good: but when he communicates his goodneſs, he knows what he does, and wills, and chuſeth to do ſo.

And this kind of neceſſity is ſo far from being any impeachment of the divine goodneſs, that it is the great perfection and praiſe of it. The Stoick philoſophers miſtaking this, do blaſphemouſly advance their wiſe and virtuous man above God himſelf; for they reaſon thus; "A wiſe man is good out of choice, when he "may be otherwiſe; but God, out of neceſſity of na- "ture, and when he cannot poſſibly be otherwiſe than "good." But if they had conſidered things aright, they might have known that this is an imperfection in their wiſe man, that he can be otherwiſe than good; for a power to be evil, is impotency and weakneſs. The higheſt character that ever was given of a man, is that which Velleius Paterculus gives of Cato, that he was *Vir bonus, quia aliter eſſe non potuit*; "A "good man, becauſe he could not be otherwiſe:" This applied to a mortal man, is a very extravagant and undue commendation; but it ſignifies thus much, that it is the higheſt perfection, not to be able to be otherwiſe than good; and this is the perfection of the divine nature, that goodneſs is eſſential to it: but the expreſſions and communications of his goodneſs are ſpontaneous and free, deſigned and directed by infinite knowledge and wiſdom.

This

This is the firſt: The ſecond particular is, that God hath made all creatures very good, conſidering the variety, and order, and end of them. But this I ſhall reſerve to another opportunity.

SERMON CXLIV.

The goodneſs of God.

PSAL. cxlv. 9.

The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

IN the handling of this argument, I propoſed to do theſe four things:

Firſt, To conſider what is the proper notion of goodneſs, as it is attributed to God.

Secondly, To ſhew that this perfection belongs to God.

Thirdly, To conſider the effects of the divine goodneſs, together with the large extent of it, in reſpect of its objects. And,

Fourthly, To anſwer ſome objections which may ſeem to contradict, and bring in queſtion the goodneſs of God.

I have conſidered the two firſt; and in ſpeaking to the third, I propoſed the conſidering theſe two things:

I. The univerſal extent of God's goodneſs to all his creatures.

II. More eſpecially the goodneſs of God to man, which we are more eſpecially concerned to take notice of, and be affected with.

The firſt of theſe appears in theſe four particulars.

1. In his giving being to ſo many creatures.

2. In

2. In making them all ſo very good, conſidering the number and variety, the rank and order, the end and deſign of all of them.

3. In his continual preſervation of them.

4. In his providing ſo abundantly for the welfare and happineſs of all of them, ſo far as they are capable and ſenſible of it.

The firſt of theſe I ſpoke largely to; I proceed to ſhew,

2dly, That the univerſal goodneſs of God appears, in making all theſe creatures ſo very good, conſidering the number and variety, the rank and order, the end and deſign of all of them. His goodneſs excited and ſet a-work his power to make this world, and all the creatures in it; and that they might be made in the beſt manner that could be, his wiſdom directed his power; he hath made all things in number, weight, and meaſure; ſo that they are admirably fitted and proportioned to one another: And that there is an excellent contrivance in all ſorts of beings, and a wonderful beauty and harmony in the whole frame of things, is, I think, ſufficiently viſible to every diſcerning and unprejudiced mind. The loweſt form of creatures, I mean thoſe which are deſtitute of ſenſe, do all of them contribute, ſome way or other, to the uſe, and conveniency, and comfort of the creatures above them, which being endowed with ſenſe, are capable of enjoying the benefit and delight of them, which being ſo palpable in the greateſt part of them, may reaſonably be preſumed, though it be not ſo diſcernible concerning all the reſt; ſo that, when we ſurvey the whole creation of God, and the ſeveral parts, we may well cry out with David, Pſal. civ 24. *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wiſdom haſt thou made them all.*

It is true, indeed, there are degrees of perfection in the creatures, and God is not equally good to all of them. Thoſe creatures which are of more noble and excellent natures, and to which he hath communicated more degrees of perfection, they partake more of his goodneſs, and are more glorious inſtances of it: but every creature partakes of the divine goodneſs in a certain degree, and accord ng to the nature and capacity

of it. God, if he pleaſed, could have made nothing but immortal ſpirits; and he could have made as many of theſe as there are individual creatures of all ſorts in the world; but it ſeemed good to the wiſe Architect, to make ſeveral ranks and orders of beings, and to diſplay his power, and goodneſs, and wiſdom in all imaginable variety of creatures; all which ſhould be good in their kind, though far ſhort of the perfection of angels and immortal ſpirits.

He that will build an houſe for all uſes and purpoſes of which an houſe is capable, cannot make it all foundation, and great beams and pillars; muſt not ſo contrive it, as to make it all rooms of ſtate and entertainment; but there muſt of neceſſity be in it meaner materials, rooms and offices for ſeveral uſes and purpoſes, which, however inferior to the reſt in dignity and degree, do yet contribute to the beauty and advantage of the whole: ſo, in this great frame of the world, it was fit there ſhould be variety, and different degrees of perfection in the ſeveral parts of it; and this is ſo far from being an impeachment of the wiſdom or goodneſs of him that made it, that it is an evidence of both: for the meaneſt of all God's creatures is good, conſidering the nature and rank of it, and the end to which it was deſigned; and we cannot imagine how it could have been ordered and framed better, though we can eaſily tell how it might have been worſe, and that if this or that had been wanting, or had been otherwiſe, it had not been ſo good; and thoſe who have been moſt converſant in the contemplation of nature, and of the works of God, have been moſt ready to make this acknowledgment.

But then, if we conſider the creatures of God, with relation to one another, and with regard to the whole frame of things, they will all appear to be very good; and notwithſtanding this or that kind of creatures be much leſs perfect than another, and there be a very great diſtance between the perfection of a worm, and of an angel; yet, conſidering every thing in the rank and order which it hath in the creation, it is as good as could be, conſidering its nature and uſe, and the place allotted to it among the creatures.

And

And this difference in the works of God, between the goodneſs of the ſeveral parts of the creation, and the excellent and perfect goodneſs of the whole, the ſcripture is very careful to expreſs to us in the hiſtory of the creation, where you find God repreſented as firſt looking upon, and conſidering every day's work by itſelf, and approving it, and pronouncing it to be good; Gen. i. 4. 10. 12. 18. 21. 24. at the end of every day's work, it is ſaid, that *God ſaw it, and it was good:* but then, when all was finiſhed, and he ſurveyed the whole together, it is ſaid, ver. 31. that *God ſaw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good: very good*, that is, *the beſt;* the Hebrews having no other ſuperlative. Every creature of God, by itſelf, is good; but, take the whole together, and they are very good, the beſt that could be.

3*dly*, The univerſal goodneſs of God further appears, in the careful and continual preſervation of the things which he hath made: his upholding and maintaining the ſeveral creatures in being, in their natural ſtate and order; thoſe which have life, in life, to the period which he hath determined and appointed for them; in his preſerving the whole world, his managing and governing this vaſt frame of things, in ſuch ſort, as to keep it from running into confuſion and diſorder. This is a clear demonſtration, no leſs of the goodneſs than of the wiſdom and power of God, that for ſo many ages all the parts of it have kept their places, and perform the offices and work for which nature deſigned them; that the world is not, in the courſe of ſo many thouſand years, grown old and weak, and out of repair, and that the frame of things doth not diſſolve and fall in pieces.

And the goodneſs of God doth not only take care of the main, and ſupport the whole frame of things, and preſerve the more noble and conſiderable creatures, but even the leaſt and meaneſt of them. The providence of God doth not overlook any thing that he hath made, nor deſpiſe any of the works of his hands, ſo as to let them relapſe, and fall back into nothing, through neglect and inadvertency; as many as there are, he takes care of them all. Pſal. civ. 27. 28. where the Pſalmiſt, ſpeak-

ing of the innumerable multitude of creatures upon the earth, and in the ſea, *Theſe*, ſaith he, *wait all upon thee, that thou mayeſt give them their meat in due ſeaſon; that thou giveſt them they gather, thou openeſt thine hand, and they are filled with good.* And, to the ſame purpoſe, Pſal. cxlv. 15, 16. *The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou giveſt them their meat in due ſeaſon; thou openeſt thine hand, and ſatisfieſt the deſire of every living thing.* The inanimate creatures, which are without ſenſe; and the brute creatures, which, though they have ſenſe, are without underſtanding, and ſo can have no end and deſign of ſelf-preſervation, God preſerves them, no leſs than men who are endowed with reaſon and foreſight to provide for themſelves: Pſal. xxxiv. vi. *Thou preſerveſt man and beaſt.* And Pſal. cxlvii. 9. *He giveth to the beaſt his food, and to the young ravens which cry.* And ſo our Saviour declares to us the particular providence of God towards thoſe creatures, Matth. vi. 26. *Behold the fowls of the air: for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.* Ver. 28, 29. *Conſider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they ſpin: and yet I ſay unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of theſe.*

And though all the creatures below man, being without underſtanding, can take no notice of this bounty of God to them, nor make any acknowledgments to him for it: yet man, who is the prieſt of the viſible creation, and placed here in this great temple of the world, to offer up ſacrifices of praiſe and thankſgiving to God, for his univerſal goodneſs to all his creatures, ought to bleſs God in their behalf, and to ſing praiſes to him, in the name of all the inferior creatures, which are ſubjected to his dominion and uſe; becauſe they are all, as it were, his family, his ſervants and utenſils; and if God ſhould neglect any of them, and ſuffer them to periſh and miſcarry, it is we that ſhould find the inconvenience and want of them; and therefore we ſhould, on their behalf, celebrate the praiſes of God; as we find David often does in the Pſalms, calling upon the inanimate and the brute creatures to praiſe the Lord.

4*thly*,

4*thly*, The univerſal goodneſs of God doth yet further appear, in providing ſo abundantly for the welfare and happineſs of all his creatures, ſo far as they are capable and ſenſible of it. He doth not only ſupport and preſerve his creatures in being, but takes care that they ſhould all enjoy that happineſs and pleaſure which their natures are capable of. The creatures endowed with ſenſe and reaſon, which only are capable of pleaſure and happineſs, God hath taken care to ſatisfy the ſeveral appetites and inclinations which he hath planted in them: and according as nature hath enlarged their deſires and capacities, ſo he enlargeth his bounty towards them; *he openeth his hand, and ſatisfieth the deſire of every living thing*. God doth not immediately bring meat to the creatures, when they are hungry, but it is near to them, commonly in the elements wherein they are bred, or within their reach, and he hath planted inclinations in them to hunt after it, and to lead and direct them to it, and to encourage ſelf-preſervation, and to oblige and inſtigate them to it; and that they might not be melancholy and weary of life, he hath ſo ordered the nature of living creatures, that hunger and thirſt are moſt implacable deſires, exceeding painful, and even intolerable; and likewiſe that the ſatisfaction of theſe appetites ſhould be a mighty pleaſure to them. And for thoſe creatures, that are young and not able to provide for themſelves, God hath planted in all creatures a ſοργή, a natural affection towards their young ones, which will effectually put them upon ſeeking proviſions for them, and cheriſhing them, with that care and tenderneſs which their weak and helpleſs condition doth require: And reaſon is not more powerful and effectual in mankind to this purpoſe, than this natural inſtinct is in brute creatures; which ſhews what care God hath taken, and what proviſion he hath made in the natural frame of all his creatures, for the ſatisfaction of the inclinations and appetites which he hath planted in them; the ſatisfaction whereof is their pleaſure and happineſs. And thus I have done with the firſt head I propoſed, the univerſal extent of God's goodneſs to his creatures. Let us now proceed in the

II. Place, to conſider more particularly the goodneſs of God to men; which we are more eſpecially concerned to take notice of, and to be affected with it. And we need go no farther than our own obſervation and experience, to prove the goodneſs of God; every day of our lives *we ſee and taſte that the Lord is good;* all that we are, and all the good that we enjoy, and all that we expect and hope for, is from the divine goodneſs; *Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,* Jam. i. 17. And the beſt and moſt perfect of his gifts he beſtows on the ſons of men. What is ſaid of the wiſdom of God, Prov. viii. may be applied to his goodneſs; the goodneſs of God ſhines forth in all the works of the creation, in the heavens and clouds above, and in the fountains of the great deep, in the earth and the fields, but *its delight is with the ſons of men.* Such is the goodneſs of God to man, that it is repreſented to us in ſcripture under the notion of love: God is good to all his creatures, but he is only ſaid to *love the ſons of men.* More particularly the goodneſs of God to man appears,

1. That he hath given us ſuch noble and excellent beings, and placed us in ſo high a rank and order of his creatures. We owe to him that we are, and what we are; we do not only partake of that effect of his goodneſs which is common to us with all other creatures, that we have received our being from him; but we are peculiarly obliged to him for his more eſpecial goodneſs, that he hath made us reaſonable creatures, of that kind which we ſhould have choſen to have been of, if we could ſuppoſe that before we were, it had been referred to us, and put to our choice, what part we would be of this viſible world. But we did not contrive and chuſe this condition for ourſelves, we are no ways acceſſary to the dignity and excellency of our beings: but God choſe this condition for us, and made us what we are: ſo that we may ſay with David, Pſal. c. 3, 4, 5. *It is he that hath made us, and not we ourſelves. O enter into his gates with thankſgiving, and into his courts with praiſe; be thankful unto him and ſpeak good of his name: for the Lord is good.* The gooodneſs of God is the ſpring and fountain of our beings; but for that, we had

had been nothing; and but for this farther goodneſs, we might have been any thing, of the loweſt and meaneſt rank of his creatures. But the goodneſs of God hath been pleaſed to advance us to be the top and perfection of the viſible creation; he hath been pleaſed to endow us with mind and underſtanding, and made us capable of happineſs, in the knowledge, and love, and enjoyment of himſelf. He hath curiouſly and wonderfully wrought the frame of our bodies, ſo as to make them fit habitations for reaſonable ſouls, and immortal ſpirits; he hath made our very bodies veſſels of honour, when of the very ſame clay he hath made innumerable other creatures of a much lower rank and condition: ſo that though man, in reſpect of his body, be a-kin to the earth, yet in regard of his ſoul, he is allied to heaven, of a divine original, and deſcended from above. Of all the creatures in this viſible world, man is the chief; and what is ſaid of behemoth, or the elephant, Job xlii. in reſpect of his great ſtrength, and the vaſt bigneſs of his body, is only true abſolutely of man, that he is, *divini opificii caput*; "The chief of the ways of God, "and upon earth there is none like him."

The Pſalmiſt takes particular notice of the goodneſs of God to man, in this reſpect of the excellency and dignity of his being: Pſal. viii. 5. *Thou haſt made him little lower than the angels, and haſt crowned him with glory and honour.* And this advantage of our nature above other creatures, we ought thankfully to acknowledge; though moſt men are ſo ſtupid as to overlook it; as Elihu complains, Job xxxv. 10, 11. *None ſaith, where is God my maker, who teacheth us more than the beaſts of the earth, and maketh us wiſer than the fowls of heaven?*

2. The goodneſs of God to man appears, in that he hath made and ordained ſo many things chiefly for our uſe. The beauty and uſefulneſs of the creatures below us, their plain ſubſerviency to our neceſſity, and benefit, and delight, are ſo many clear evidences of the divine goodneſs to us, not only diſcernible to our reaſon, but even palpable to our ſenſes, ſo that we may *ſee and taſte that the Lord is gracious.*

This

This David particularly inſiſts upon, as a ſpecial ground of praiſe and thankſgiving to God, that he hath ſubjected ſo great a part of the creation to our dominion and uſe, Pſal. viii. 6, 7, 8. ſpeaking of man. *Thou haſt made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou haſt put all things under his feet; all ſheep and oxen, yea, and the beaſts of the field; th' fowl of the air, and the fiſh of the ſea, and whatſoever paſſeth through the paths of the ſeas.* What an innumerable variety of creatures are there in this inferior world, which were either ſolely or principally made for the uſe and ſervice, pleaſure and delight of man! How many things are there, which ſerve for the neceſſity and ſupport, for the contentment and comfort of our lives! How many things for the refreſhment and delight of our ſenſes, and the exerciſe and employment of our underſtandings! That God hath not made man for the ſervice of other creatures, but other creatures for the ſervice of man, Epictetus doth very ingeniouſly argue from this obſervation; that the creatures below man, the brute beaſts, have all things in a readineſs, nature having provided for them meat, and drink, and lodging; ſo that they have no abſolute need that any ſhould build houſes, or make cloaths, or ſtore up proviſion, or prepare and dreſs meat for them: " For, ſays he, being made for the " ſervice of another, they ought to be furniſhed with " theſe things, that they may be always in a readi- " neſs to ſerve their lord and maſter; a plain evidence " that they were made to ſerve man, and not man to " ſerve them.

And, to raiſe our thoughts of God's goodneſs to us the ſons of men yet higher, as he hath given us the creatures below us for our uſe and convenience, ſo hath he appointed the creatures above us for our guard and proteſtion, not to ſay for our ſervice: Pſal. xxxiv. 7. *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them:* and then it follows, *O taſte and ſee that the Lord is good!* And Pſal. xci. 11, 12. *He ſhall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: They ſhall bear thee up in their hands.* Nay, the Apoſtle ſpeaks as if their whole buſineſs and em-

employment were to attend upon, and be ſerviceable to good men; Heb. i. 14. *Are they not all miniſtring ſpirits, ſent forth to miniſter for them who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation?*

3. The goodneſs of God to men appears, in his tender love, and peculiar care of us above the reſt of the creatures, being ready to impart and diſpenſe to us the good that is ſuitable to our capacity and condition, and concerned to exempt us from thoſe manifold evils of want and pain, to which we are obnoxious: I do not mean an abſolute exemption from all ſorts and degrees of evil, and a perpetual tenure of temporal happineſs, and enjoyment of all good things; this is not ſuitable to our preſent ſtate, and the rank and order which we are in among the creatures; nor would it be beſt for us, all things conſidered. But the goodneſs of God to us above other creatures, is proportionable to the dignity and excellency of our natures above them; for, as the Apoſtle reaſons in another caſe, *doth God take care for oxen,* and ſhall he not much more extend his care to man? To this purpoſe our Saviour reaſons, Matth. vi. 26. *Behold the fowls of the air; for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?* And ver. 30. *Wherefore if God ſo cloath the graſs of the field, which to day is, and to-morrow is caſt into the oven, ſhall he not much more cloath you?* And chap. x. 29, 30, 31. *Are not two ſparrows ſold for a farthing? and one of them ſhall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many ſparrows.* It is true, God hath a ſpecial care of his people and ſervants, above the reſt of mankind; but our Saviour uſeth theſe arguments to his diſciples, to convince them of the providence of God towards them, as men, and of a more excellent nature than other creatures.

And indeed we are born into the world more deſtitute and helpleſs than other creatures; as if it were on purpoſe to ſhew that God had reſerved us for his more peculiar care and providence; which is ſo great, that the ſcripture, by way of condeſcenſion, expreſſeth it

it to us by the name of love; ſo that what effects of care the greateſt and tendereſt affection in men is apt to produce towards one another, that, and much more, is the effect of God's goodneſs to us: and this affection of God is common to all men, (though, of all creatures, we have leaſt deſerved it) and is ready to diffuſe and ſhed abroad itſelf, where-ever men are qualified for it by duty and obedience, and do not obſtruct and ſtop the emanations of it, by their ſins and provocations.

And though the greateſt part of mankind be evil, yet this doth not wholly put a ſtop to his goodneſs, though it cauſe many abatements of it, and hinder many good things from us: but ſuch is the goodneſs of God, notwithſtanding the evil and undutifulneſs of men, that he is pleaſed ſtill to concern himſelf in the government of the world, and to preſerve the ſocieties of men from running into utter confuſion and diſorder; notwithſtanding the violence and irregularities of mens wills and paſſions, the communities of men ſubſiſt upon tolerable terms; and notwithſtanding the rage and craft of evil men, poor and unarmed innocence and virtue is uſually protected, and ſometimes, rewarded in this world, and domineering and outrageous wickedneſs is very often remarkably checked and chaſtiſed. All which inſtances of God's providence, as they are greatly for the advantage and comfort of mankind, ſo are they an effectual declaration of that goodneſs which governs all things, and of God's kind care of the affairs and concernments of men; ſo that if we look no further than this world, we may ſay with David, *Verily there is a reward for the righteous, verily there is a God that judgeth the earth.*

I know this argument hath been perverted to a quite contrary purpoſe; that if goodneſs governed the world, and adminiſtred the affairs of it, good and evil would not be ſo careleſly and promiſcuouſly diſpenſed; good men would not be ſo great ſufferers, nor wicked men ſo proſperous as many times they are.

But this alſo, if rightly conſidered, is an effect of God's goodneſs, and infinite patience to mankind, that *he cauſeth his ſun to riſe, and his rain to fall upon the juſt and unjuſt*; that, upon the provocations of men, he

he does not give over his care of them, and throw all things into confuſion and ruin: this plainly ſhews, that he deſigns this life for the trial of mens virtue and obedience, in order to the greater reward of it; and therefore *he ſuffers men to walk in their own ways*, without any great check and controul, and reſerves the main bulk of rewards and puniſhments for another world: ſo that all this is ſo far from being any objection againſt the goodneſs of God, that on the contrary, it is an argument of God's immenſe goodneſs, and infinite patience, that the world ſubſiſts and continues, and that he permits men to take their courſe, for the fuller trial of them, and the clearer and more effectual declaration of his juſtice, in the rewards and puniſhments of another life.

4. And laſtly, The goodneſs of God to mankind moſt glorioufly appears, in the proviſion he hath made for our eternal happineſs. What the happineſs of man ſhould have been, had he continued in innocency, is not particularly revealed to us; but this is certain, that by wilful tranſgreſſions we have forfeited all that happineſs which our natures are capable of. In this lapſed and ruinous condition of mankind, the goodneſs and mercy of God was pleaſed to employ his wiſdom for our recovery, and to reſtore us not only to a new but a greater capacity of glory and happineſs. And, in order to this, the Son of God aſſumes our nature for the recovery and redemption of man; and the pardon of ſin is purchaſed for us by his blood; eternal life, and the way to it, are clearly diſcovered to us. God is pleaſed to enter into a new and better covenant with us, and to afford us inward grace and aſſiſtance, to enable us to perform the conditions of it, and graciouſly to accept of our faith and repentance, of our ſincere reſolutions and endeavours of holineſs and obedience, for perfect and compleat righteouſneſs, for his ſake who fulfilled all righteouſneſs.

This is the great and amazing goodneſs of God to mankind, that when we were in open rebellion againſt him, he ſhould entertain thoughts of peace and reconciliation; and when he paſſed by the fallen angels, he ſhould ſet his affection and love upon the ſinful and miſerable

ſerable ſons of men. And *herein is the love of God to men perfected*, that as he hath made all creatures, both above us, and below us, ſubſervient and inſtrumental to our ſubſiſtence and preſervation; ſo, for the ranſom of our ſouls from eternal ruin and miſery, *he hath not ſpared his own Son, but hath given him up to death for us*; him, whom *he hath commanded all the angels of God to worſhip*, and to whom he hath made ſubject all creatures in heaven and earth; him, *who made the world, and who upholds all things by the word of his power, who is the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon.*

And after ſuch a ſtupendous inſtance as this, what may we not reaſonably hope for, and promiſe ourſelves from the divine goodneſs? So the Apoſtle hath taught us to reaſon; Rom. viii. 32. *He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all things?*

SERMON CXLV.

The goodneſs of God.

PSAL. cxlv. 9.

The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

The third ſermon on this text.

IN handling this argument, I proceeded in this method:

Firſt, To conſider what is the proper notion of goodneſs.

Secondly, To ſhew that this perfection of goodneſs belongs to God.

Thirdly, I conſidered the effects of the divine goodneſs, under theſe heads:

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I. The univerſal extent of it, in the number, variety, order, end, and deſign of the things created by him; and his preſervation, and providing for the welfare and happineſs of them.

II. I conſidered more particularly the goodneſs of God to mankind, of which I gave theſe four inſtances:

1. That he hath given us ſuch noble beings, and placed us in ſo high a rank and order of his creatures.

2. In that he hath made and ordained ſo many things chiefly for us.

3. In that he exerciſeth ſo peculiar a providence over us above the reſt, that though he is ſaid *to be good to all*, he is only ſaid *to love the ſons of men*.

4. In that he hath provided for us eternal life and happineſs. There only now remains the

Fourth and laſt particular to be ſpoken to, which was, To anſwer ſome objections which may ſeem to contradict, and bring in queſtion the goodneſs of God; and they are many, and have, ſome of them eſpecially, great difficulty in them; and therefore it will require great conſideration and care, to give a clear and ſatisfactory anſwer to them, which undoubtedly they are capable of; the goodneſs of God being one of the moſt certain and unqueſtionable truths in the world. I ſhall mention thoſe which are moſt conſiderable and obvious, and do almoſt of themſelves ſpring up in every man's mind; and they are theſe four; the firſt of them more general, the other three more particular.

1*ſt*, If God be ſo exceeding good, whence comes it to paſs that there is ſo much evil in the world, of ſeveral kinds; evil of imperfection, evil of affliction or ſuffering, and (which is the greateſt of all others, and indeed the cauſe of them) evil of ſin?

2*dly*, The doctrine of abſolute reprobation; by which is meant, the decreeing of the greateſt part of mankind to eternal miſery and torment, without any conſideration or reſpect to their ſin or fault: this ſeems notoriouſly to contradict, not only the notion of infinite goodneſs, but any competent meaſure and degree of goodneſs.

3*dly*, The eternal miſery and puniſhment of men for temporal faults, ſeems hard to be reconciled with that exceſs of goodneſs which we ſuppoſe to be God.

4*thly*, The inſtances of God's great ſeverity to mankind, upon occaſion, in thoſe great calamities, which, by the providence of God, hath, in ſeveral ages, either befallen mankind in general, or particular nations: and here I ſhall confine myſelf to ſcripture-inſtances, as being the moſt certain and remarkable, or at leaſt equal to any that are to be met with in hiſtory; as the early and univerſal degeneracy of mankind, by the ſin and tranſgreſſion of our firſt parents; the deſtruction of the world by a general deluge; the ſudden and terrible deſtruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, by fire and brimſtone from heaven; the cruel extirpation of the Canaanites, by the expreſs command of God; and, laſtly, the great calamities which befel the Jewiſh nation, and the final ruin and perdition of them at the deſtruction of Jeruſalem.

Theſe are the objections againſt the goodneſs of God which I ſhall ſeverally conſider, and with all the brevity and and clearneſs I can, endeavour to return a particular anſwer to them.

The *Firſt* objection, which I told you is more general, is this; If God be ſo exceeding good, whence then comes it to paſs, that there is ſo much evil in the world of ſeveral kinds? It is evident, beyond denial, that evil abounds in the world: *The whole world lies in evil*, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται, *lies in the wickedneſs*, (ſo our tranſlation renders it) is involved in ſin; but, by the article and oppoſition, St. John ſeems to intend *the devil: We know*, ſays he, *that we are of God, and the whole world*, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται, *is ſubject to the evil one*, and under his power and dominion. Which way ſoever we render it, it ſignifies, that evil of one kind or other reigns in the world. Now, can evil come from a good God? *Out of the ſame mouth proceedeth bleſſing and curſing? Doth a fountain ſend forth at the ſame place ſweet water and bitter? This cannot be*, as James ſpeaks in another caſe. But all evils that are in the world, muſt either be directly procured by the divine providence, or permitted to happen; and next

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to the cauſing and procuring of evil, it ſeems to be contrary to the goodneſs of God, to permit that there ſhould be any ſuch thing, when it is in his power to help and hinder it.

Anſ. To give an account of this: It was an antient doctrine of ſome of the moſt antient nations, that there were two firſt cauſes or principles of all things, the one of good things, the other of bad; which, among the Perſians, were called Oromaſdes and Arimanius; among the Egyptians, Oſiris, and Typhon; among the Chaldeans, good or bad planets; among the Greeks, Ζεὺς and Ἅιδης. Plutarch expreſly ſays, that the good principle was called God, and the bad Demon, or the Devil: in conformity to which antient traditions, the Manichees, a ſad ſect of Chriſtians, ſet up two principles, the one infinitely good, which they ſuppoſed to be the original cauſe of all good that is in the world; the other infinitely evil, to which they aſcribed all the evils that are in the world.

But, beſides that the notion of an infinite evil is a contradiction, it would be to no purpoſe, to ſuppoſe two oppoſite principles of equal power and force. That the very notion of an infinite evil is a contradiction will be very clear, if we conſider, that what is infinitely evil, muſt be infinitely imperfect, and conſequently infinitely weak; and, for that reaſon, though never ſo miſchievous and malicious, yet being infinitely weak, and ignorant, and fooliſh, would neither be in a capacity to contrive miſchief, nor to execute it. But, admit that a being infinitely miſchievous were infinitely cunning, and infinitely powerful, yet it could do no evil; becauſe the oppoſite principle of infinite goodneſs, being alſo infinitely wiſe and powerful, they would tie up one another's hands; ſo that, upon this ſuppoſition, the notion of a deity would ſignify juſt nothing; and, by virtue of the eternal oppoſition and equality of theſe two principles, they would keep one another at a perpetual bay; and, being an equal match for one another, inſtead of being two deities, they would be two idols, able to do neither good nor evil.

But, to return a more diſtinct and ſatisfactory anſwer to this objection, there are three ſorts of evil in

the world; the evil of imperfection; the evil of affliction and ſuffering; and the evil of ſin. And,

I. For the evil of imperfection, I mean, natural imperfections; theſe are not ſimply and abſolutely, but only comparatively evil: now, comparative evil is but a leſs degree of goodneſs; and it is not at all inconſiſtent with the goodneſs of God, that ſome creatures ſhould be leſs good than others, that is, imperfect in compariſon of them; nay, it is very agreeable both to the goodneſs and wiſdom of God, that there ſhould be this variety in the creatures, and that they ſhould be of ſeveral degrees of perfection, being made for ſeveral uſes and purpoſes, and to be ſubſervient to one another, provided they all contribute to the harmony and beauty of the whole.

Some imperfection is neceſſarily involved in the very nature and condition of a creature, as that it derives its being from another, and neceſſarily depends upon it, and is beholden to it, and is likewiſe, of neceſſity, finite and limited in its nature and perfections; and, as for thoſe creatures which are leſs perfect than others, this alſo, that there ſhould be degrees of perfection, is neceſſary, upon ſuppoſition, that the wiſdom of God thinks fit to diſplay itſelf in variety of creatures of ſeveral kinds and ranks: for though, comparing the creatures with one another, the angelical nature is beſt, and moſt perfect; yet it is abſolutely beſt, that there ſhould be other creatures beſides angels. There are many parts of the creation which are raſhly and inconſiderately by us concluded to be evil and imperfect, as ſome noxious and hurtful creatures, which yet, in other reſpects, and to ſome purpoſes, may be very uſeful, and againſt the harm and miſchief whereof we are ſufficiently armed, by ſuch means of defence, and ſuch antidotes, as reaſon and experience are able to find and furniſh us withal; and thoſe parts of the world which we think of little or no uſe, as rocks and deſarts, and that vaſt wilderneſs of the the ſea, if we conſider things well, are of great uſe to ſeveral very conſiderable purpoſes; or, if we can diſcern no other uſe of them, they ſerve at leaſt to help our dulneſs, and to make us more attentively to conſider, and to admire the perfection and uſefulneſs of the reſt;

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at the worſt, they may ſerve for foils to ſet off the wiſe order and contrivance of other things, and (as one expreſſeth it very well) they may be like a black-moor's head in a picture, which gives the greateſt beauty to the whole piece.

II. For the evils of affliction and ſuffering; and theſe either befal brute creatures, or men endowed with reaſon and conſideration.

1. For thoſe which befal the brute creatures; thoſe ſufferings which nature inflicts upon them are very few; the greateſt they meet withal are from men, or upon their account, for whoſe ſake they were chiefly made, and to whoſe reaſonable uſe and gentle dominion they are conſigned.

It is neceſſary, from the very nature of theſe creatures, that they ſhould be paſſive, and liable to pain; and yet it doth in noways contradict either the wiſdom or goodneſs of God to make ſuch creatures, becauſe all theſe pains are for the moſt part fully recompenſed by the pleaſure theſe creatures find in life; and that they have ſuch a pleaſure and happineſs in life, is evident, in that all creatures, notwithſtanding the miſeries they endure, are ſtill fond of life, and unwilling to part with it: no creature but man, who only hath perverted his nature, ever ſeeks the deſtruction of itſelf; and ſince all brute creatures are ſo loth to go out of being, we may probably conclude, that if they could deliberate whether they would be or not, they would chuſe to come into being, even upon theſe hard conditions.

But, however that be, this we are ſure of, that they ſuffer chiefly from us, and upon our account; we, who are their natural lords, having depraved ourſelves firſt, are become cruel and tyrannical to them; nay, the ſcripture tells us, that they ſuffer for our ſakes, and that *the whole creation groaneth, and is in bondage* for the ſin of man. And this is not unreaſonable, that being made principally for man, they ſhould ſuffer upon his account, as a part of his goods and eſtate; not as a puniſhment to them, (which, under the notion of puniſhment, they are not capable of) but as a puniſhment to him who is the lord and owner of them, they being by this means become more weak and frail, and leſs uſeful and ſer-

viceable to him for whom they were made; ſo that the ſufferings of the creatures below us are, in a great meaſure, to be charged upon us, under whoſe dominion God hath put them.

2. As for the afflictions and ſufferings which befal men, theſe are not natural and of God's making, but the reſult and fruit of our own doings, the effects and conſequences of the ill uſe of our own liberty, and free choice; and God does not willingly ſend them upon us, but we wilfully pull them down upon ourſelves; for *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men,* as the Prophet tells us, Lam. iii. 33. or, as it is in the Wiſdom of Solomon, chap. i. 12, 13. *God made not death, neither hath he pleaſure in the deſtruction of the living; but men pull deſtruction upon themſelves, with the works of their own hands.* All the evils that are in the world, are either the effects of our own ſin, as poverty, and diſgrace, pains, diſeaſes, and death, which are ſometimes more immediately inflicted upon men by a viſible providence and hand of God, but are uſually brought upon us by ourſelves, in the natural courſe and order of things; or they are the effects of other mens ſins, brought upon us by the ambition and covetouſneſs, by the malice and cruelty of others: and theſe evils, though they are procured and cauſed by others, yet they are deſerved by ourſelves; and though they are immediately from the hand of men, yet we ought to look farther, and conſider them as directed and diſpoſed by the providence of God; as David did when Shimei curſed him; *God,* ſaith he, *hath bid him curſe David,* though it immediately proceeded from Shimei's inſolence and ill nature.

Now, upon the ſuppoſition of ſin, the evils of affliction and ſuffering are good, becauſe they are of great uſe to us, and ſerve to very good ends and purpoſes.

1ſt. As they are the proper puniſhments of ſin. Evil is good to them that do evil; that is, it is fit and proper, juſt and due: Pſal. cvii. 17, *Fools, becauſe of their tranſgreſſion, and becauſe of their iniquities, are afflicted.* And it is fit they ſhould be ſo; crooked to crooked, is ſtraight and right. *A rod for the back of fools,* ſaith Solomon; and elſewhere, *God hath made every*

very thing for that which is fit for it, and the evil day for the wicked man.

2*dly*, As they are the preventions and remedies of greater evils. Evils of affliction and ſuffering are good for wicked men, to bring them to a ſenſe of their ſin, and to reclaim them from it, and thereby to prevent greater temporal evils, and preſerve them from eternal miſery; and not only good to the perſon that ſuffers, but likewiſe to others, to deter and affright them from the like ſins; to prevent the contagion of ſin, and to ſtop the progreſs of iniquity, upon which greater guilt and worſe miſchiefs might enſue; and they are good to good men, to awaken and rouſe them out of their ſecurity, to make them know God and themſelves better; they are almoſt a neceſſary diſcipline for the beſt of men, much more for evil and depraved diſpoſitions; and we might as reaſonably expect that there ſhould be no rod in a ſchool, as that there ſhould be no ſuffering and afflictions in the world,

3*dly*, As they are the occaſions and matter of many virtues. God teacheth men temperance by want, and patience by reproach and ſufferings, charity by perſecution, and pity and compaſſion to others by grievous pains upon ourſelves. The benefit of afflictions, to them that make a wiſe uſe of them, is unſpeakable: they are grievous in themſelves, *Nevertheleſs*, ſaith the Apoſtle to the Hebrews, *they bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs, to them that are exerciſed therewith.* David gives a great teſtimony of the mighty benefit and advantage of them, from his own experience; Pſal. cxix. 67. *Before I was afflicted, I went aſtray; but now have I kept thy word.* And ver. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy ſtatutes.*

4*thly*, The evils of ſuffering, patiently ſubmitted to, and decently borne, do greatly contribute to the increaſe of our happineſs. All the perſecutions and ſufferings of good men in this life, *do work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* And, if they contribute to our greater good and happineſs at laſt, they are good. The glorious reward of the ſuffering which we have met with in this life, will, in the next, clear

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up the goodneſs and juſtice of the divine providence from all thoſe miſts and clouds which are now upon it, and fully acquit it from thoſe objections which are now raiſed againſt it, upon account of the afflictions and ſufferings of good men in this life, which *are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in them.*

III. As for the evil of ſin, which is the great difficulty of all, how is it conſiſtent with the goodneſs of God, to permit ſo great an evil as this to come into the world? For anſwer to this, I deſire theſe two things may be conſidered:

1. That it doth not at all contradict the wiſdom or goodneſs of God, to make a creature of ſuch a frame, as to be capable of having its obedience tried, in order to the reward of it; which could not be, unleſs ſuch a creature were made mutable, and, by the good or bad uſe of its liberty, capable of obeying or diſobeying the laws of his Creator: for where there is no poſſibility of ſinning, there can be no trial of our virtue and obedience; and nothing but virtue and obedience are capable of reward. The goodneſs of God towards us is ſufficiently vindicated, in that he made us capable of happineſs, and gave us ſufficient direction and power for the attaining of that end; and it does in no wiſe contradict his goodneſs, that he does not, by his omnipotency, interpoſe to prevent our ſin: for this had been to alter the nature of things, and not to let man be the creature he made him, capable of reward or puniſhment, according to the good or bad uſe of his own free choice. It is ſufficient that God made man good at firſt, though mutable, and that he had a power to have continued ſo, though he wilfully determined himſelf to evil: this acquits the goodneſs of God, that *he made man upright, but he found out to himſelf many inventions.*

2. If there had not been ſuch an order and rank of creatures as had been in their nature mutable, there had been no place for the manifeſtation of God's goodneſs in a way of mercy and patience: So that, though God be not the author of the ſins of men, yet, in caſe of their wilful tranſgreſſion and diſobedience, the goodneſs of God hath a fair opportunity of diſcovering itſelf, in his patience and long-ſuffering to ſinners, and in his

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merciful care and proviſion for their recovery out of that miſerable ſtate. And this may ſuffice for anſwer to the firſt objection, if God be ſo good, whence then comes evil?

The *Second* objection againſt the goodneſs of God, is from the doctrine of abſolute reprobation; by which I mean, the decreeing the greateſt part of mankind to eternal miſery and torment, without any conſideration or reſpect to their ſin and fault. This ſeems not only notoriouſly to contradict the notion of infinite goodneſs, but to be utterly inconſiſtent with the leaſt meaſure and degree of goodneſs. Indeed, if by reprobation were only meant, that God, in his own infinite knowledge, foreſees the ſins and wickedneſs of men, and hath, from all eternity, determined in himſelf, what in his word he hath ſo plainly declared, that he will puniſh impenitent ſinners with everlaſting deſtruction; or, if by reprobation be meant, that God hath not elected all mankind; that is, abſolutely decreed to bring them infallibly to ſalvation: neither of theſe notions of reprobation is any ways inconſiſtent with the goodneſs of God; for he may foreſee the wickedneſs of men, and determine to puniſh it, without any impeachment of his goodneſs: he may be very good to all, and yet not equally and in the ſame degree: if God pleaſe to bring any infallibly to ſalvation, this is tranſcendent goodneſs; but if he put all others into a capacity of it, and uſe all neceſſary and fitting means to make them happy, and, after all this, any fall ſhort of happineſs through their own wilful fault and obſtinacy; theſe men are evil and cruel to themſelves, but God hath been very good and merciful to them.

But if, by reprobation be meant, either that God hath decreed, without reſpect to the ſins of men, their abſolute ruin and miſery, or that he hath decreed that they ſhall inevitably ſin and periſh; it cannot be denied, but that ſuch a reprobation as this doth clearly overthrow all poſſible notion of goodneſs. I have told you, that the true and only notion of goodneſs in God is this, that it is a propenſion and diſpoſition of the divine nature, to communicate being and happineſs to his creatures: but ſurely nothing can be more plainly contrary

to

to a diſpoſition to make them happy, than an abſolute decree, and a peremptory reſolution to make them miſerable. God is infinitely better than the beſt of men, and yet none can poſſibly think that man a good man, who ſhould abſolutely reſolve to diſinherit and deſtroy his children, without the foreſight and conſideration of any fault to be committed by them. We may talk of the goodneſs of God; but it is not an eaſy matter to deviſe to ſay any thing worſe than this of the devil?

But it is ſaid, reprobation is an act of ſovereignty in God; and therefore not to be meaſured by the common rules of goodneſs. But it is contrary to goodneſs, and plainly inconſiſtent with it; and we muſt not attribute ſuch a ſovereignty to God, as contradicts his goodneſs; for, if the ſovereignty of God may break in at pleaſure upon his other attributes, then it ſignifies nothing to ſay that God is good, and wiſe, and juſt, if his ſovereignty may at any time act contrary to theſe perfections.

Now, if the doctrine of abſolute reprobation, and the goodneſs of God, cannot poſſibly ſtand together, the queſtion is, which of them ought to give way to the other? What St. Paul determines in another caſe, concerning the truth and fidelity of God, will equally hold concerning his goodneſs; *Let God be good, and every man a liar.* The doctrine of abſolute reprobation is no part of the doctrine of the holy ſcriptures, that ever I cou'd find; and there is the rule of our faith. If ſome great divines have held this doctrine, not in oppoſition to the goodneſs of God, but hoping they might be reconciled together, let them do it if they can; but if they cannot, rather let the ſchools of the greateſt divines be called in queſtion, than the goodneſs of God, which, next to his being, is the greateſt and cleareſt truth in the world.

Thirdly, It is farther objected, that the eternal puniſhment of men, for temporal faults, ſeems hard to be reconciled with that exceſs of goodneſs, which we ſuppoſe to be in God.

This objection I have fully anſwered, in a diſcourſe upon St. Matthew, chap. xxv. 46. and therefore ſhall proceed to the

Fourth

Fourth and *laſt* objection againſt the goodneſs of God, from ſundry inſtances of God's ſeverity to mankind, in thoſe great calamities, which by the providence of God, have in ſeveral ages, either befallen mankind in general, or particular nations.

And here I ſhall confine myſelf to ſcripture inſtances, as being moſt known, and moſt certain and remarkable, or at leaſt equally remarkable with any that are to be met with in any other hiſtory; ſuch are the early and univerſal degeneracy of all mankind, by the ſin and tranſgreſſion of our firſt parents; the deſtruction of the world by a general deluge; the ſudden and terrible deſtruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, by fire and brimſtone from heaven; the cruel extirpation of the Canaanites by the expreſs command of God; and, laſtly, the great calamities which befel the Jewiſh nation, eſpecially the final ruin and diſperſion of them at the deſtruction of Jeruſalem: theſe, and the like inſtances of God's ſeverity, ſeem to call in queſtion his goodneſs.

Againſt theſe ſevere and dreadful inſtances of God's ſeverity, it might be a ſufficient vindication of his goodneſs, to ſay in general, that they were all upon great and high provocations; and moſt of them, after long patience and forbearance, and with a great mixture of mercy, and a declared readineſs in God to have prevented or removed them, upon repentance: all which are great inſtances of the goodneſs of God: but yet, for the clearer manifeſtation of the divine goodneſs, I ſhall conſider them particularly, and as briefly as I can.

1*ſt*, As for the tranſgreſſion of our firſt parents, and the diſmal conſequences of it to all their poſterity: this is a great depth; and though the ſcripture mentions it, yet it ſpeaks but little of it; and, in matters of mere revelation, we muſt not attempt to be wiſe above what is written. Thus much is plain, that it was an act of high and wilful diſobedience to a very plain and eaſy command; and that, in the puniſhment of it, God mitigated the extremity of the ſentence, which was preſent death, by granting our firſt parents the reprieve of almoſt a thouſand years: and, as to the conſequences of it to their poſterity, God did not, upon this provocation

cation, abandon his care of mankind; and though he removed them out of that happy ſtate and place in which man was created, yet he gave them a tolerable condition and accommodations upon earth: and, which is certainly the moſt glorious inſtance of divine goodneſs that ever was, he was pleaſed to make the fall and miſery of man, the happy occaſion of ſending his Son in our nature, for the recovery and advancement of it to a much happier and better condition than that from which we fell. So the Apoſtle tells us at large, Rom. v. that *the grace of God by Jeſus Chriſt*, hath redounded much more to our benefit and advantage, than *the ſin and diſobedience of our firſt parents* did to our prejudice.

2*dly*, For the general deluge, though it look very ſevere, yet if we conſider it well, we may plainly diſcern much of goodneſs in it; it was upon great provocation, by the univerſal corruption and depravation of mankind: *The earth was filled with violence, and all fleſh had corrupted its ways; the wickedneſs of man was great upon the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*; which is not a deſcription of original ſin, but of the actual and improved wickedneſs of mankind: and yet, when the wickedneſs of men was come to this height, God gave them fair warning, before he brought this calamity upon them, *when the patience of God waited in the days of Noah*, for the ſpace of *an hundred and twenty years*; at laſt, when nothing would reclaim them, and almoſt the whole race of mankind were become ſo very bad, that it is ſaid *It repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth, and it grieved him at his heart*; when things were thus extremely bad, and like to continue ſo, God, in pity to mankind, and to put a ſtop to their growing wickedneſs and guilt, ſwept them away all at once from the face of the earth, except one family, which he had preſerved from this contagion, to be a new ſeminary of mankind; and, as the Heathen poet expreſſeth it, *Mundi melioris origo*, "The ſource and original of a better race."

3*dly*, For that terrible deſtruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimſtone from heaven, it was not brought upon them till *the cry of their ſin was great, and gone up to heaven*; till, by their unnatural luſts they had

had provoked ſupernatural vengeance. And it is very remarkable to what low terms God was pleaſed to condeſcend to Abraham for the ſparing of them; if in thoſe five cities there had been found *but ten righteous perſons, he would not have deſtroyed them for thoſe ten's ſake.* So that we may ſay with the Apoſtle, *Behold the goodneſs and ſeverity of God!* Here was wonderful goodneſs mixed with this great ſeverity.

4*thly*, For the extirpation of the Canaanites, by the expreſs command of God, which hath ſuch an appearance of ſeverity, it is to be conſidered, that this vengeance was not executed upon them, till they were grown ripe for it. God ſpared them for above four hundred years, for ſo long their growing impiety is taken notice of, Gen. xviii. 28. where it is ſaid, that *the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full:* God did not proceed to cut them off till their caſe was deſperate, paſt all hopes of recovery, till the land was defiled with abominations, and ſurcharged with wickedneſs, to that degree, as to ſpue out its inhabitants; as is expreſly ſaid, Lev. xviii. 28. When they were arrived to this pitch, it was no mercy to them to ſpare them any longer, to heap up more guilt and miſery to themſelves.

5*thly* and *laſtly*, As for the great calamities which God brought upon the Jews, eſpecially in their final ruin and diſperſion at the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; not to inſiſt upon the known hiſtory of their multiplied rebellions and provocations, of their deſpiteful uſage of God's prophets, whom he ſent to warn them of his judgments, and to call them to repentance; of their obſtinate refuſal to receive correction, and to be brought to amendment, by any means that God could uſe; for all which provocations, he at laſt delivered them into their enemies hands, to carry them away captive: not to inſiſt upon this, I ſhall only conſider their final deſtruction by the Romans, which though it be dreadfully ſevere, beyond any example of hiſtory, yet the provocation was proportionable; for this vengeance did not come upon them, till they had, as it were, extorted it by the moſt obſtinate impenitency and unbelief, in *rejecting the counſel of God againſt themſelves*, and reſiſting

ing ſuch means as would have brought Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, to repentance; till they had deſpiſed the doctrine of life and ſalvation, delivered to them by the Son of God, and confirmed from heaven by the cleareſt and greateſt miracles, and *by wicked hands had crucified and ſlain* the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. Nay, even after this greateſt of ſins that ever was committed, God waited for their repentance forty years, to ſee if in that time they would be brought to a ſenſe of their ſins, and *to know the things which belonged to their peace.* And no wonder, if, after ſuch provocations, and ſo much patience, and ſo obſtinate an impenitency, the goodneſs of God at laſt gave way to his juſtice, and *wrath came upon them to the utmoſt.*

So that all theſe inſtances, rightly conſidered, are rather commendations of the divine goodneſs, than juſt and reaſonable objections againſt it; and notwithſtanding the ſeverity of them, it is evident that God is good, from the primary inclinations of his nature, and ſevere only upon neceſſity, and in caſe of juſt provocation. And, to be otherwiſe, not to puniſh inſolent impiety and incorrigible wickedneſs in a ſevere and remarkable manner, would not be goodneſs, but a fond indulgence; not patience, but ſtupidity; not mercy to mankind, but cruelty: becauſe it would be an encouragement to them to do more miſchief, and to bring greater miſery upon themſelves.

So that, if we ſuppoſe God to be holy and juſt, as well as good, there is nothing in any of theſe inſtances, but what is very conſiſtent with all that goodneſs which we can ſuppoſe to be in a holy, and wiſe, and juſt governor, who is a declared enemy to ſin, and is reſolved to give all fitting diſcountenance to the breach and violation of his laws. It is neceſſary, in kindneſs and compaſſion to the reſt of mankind, that ſome ſhould be made remarkable inſtances of God's ſeverity; that the puniſhment of a few may be a warning to all, *that they may hear and fear*, and, by avoiding the like ſins, may prevent the like ſeverity upon themſelves.

And now I have, as briefly as I could, explained and vindicated the goodneſs of God; the conſideration whereof

of is fruitful of many excellent and uſeful inferences, in relation both to our comfort and our duty: but theſe I ſhall refer to another opportunity.

SERMON CXLVI.

The goodneſs of God.

PSAL. cxlv. 9.

The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

The fourth ſermon on this text.

I Have made ſeveral diſcourſes upon this argument, of the goodneſs of God; ſhewing what it is; on what accounts we aſcribe it to God; what are the effects and large extent of it to the whole creation, and more particularly to mankind; and, in the laſt place, conſidered the ſeveral objections which ſeem to lie againſt it. I proceed now to the application of this excellent argument, the conſideration whereof is ſo fruitful of uſeful inferences, in relation both to our comfort and duty. And,

I. This ſhews us the prodigious folly and unreaſonableneſs of Atheiſm. Moſt of the Atheiſm that is in the world, doth not ſo much conſiſt in a firm perſuaſion that there is no God, as in vain wiſhes and deſires that there were none. Bad men think it would be a happineſs to them, and that they ſhould be in a much better condition, if there were no God, than if there be one. *Nemo Deum non eſſe credit, niſi cui Deum non eſſe expedit*; "No man is apt to disbelieve a God, but he whoſe intereſt it is that there ſhould be none." And if we could ſee into the hearts of wicked men, we ſhould find this lying at the bottom, that if there be a God, he is juſt, and will puniſh ſin; that he is infinite in power,

and not to be reſiſted; and therefore kills them with his terror ſo often as they think of him: hence they apprehend it their intereſt that there ſhould be no God, and wiſh there were none, and thence are apt to cheriſh in their minds a vain hope that there is none, and at laſt endeavour to impoſe upon themſelves by vain reaſonings, and to ſuppreſs the belief of a God, and to ſtifle their natural apprehenſions and fears of him. So that it is not *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*, "Fear that firſt "made gods;" but the fear which bad men have of divine power and juſtice, that firſt tempted them to the diſbelief of him.

But were not theſe men as fooliſh as they are wicked, they would wiſh with all their hearts there were a God, and be glad to believe ſo: and the Pſalmiſt gives them their true character, who can entertain any ſuch thoughts or wiſhes; Pſal. xiv. 1. *The fool hath ſaid in his heart, there is no God:* for they are fools who do not underſtand nor conſult their true intereſt. And if this be true which I have ſaid concerning the goodneſs of God; if this be his nature, to deſire and procure the happineſs of his creatures; whoever underſtands the true nature of God, and his own true intereſt, cannot but wiſh there were a God, and be glad of any argument to prove it, and rejoice to find it true; as children are glad of a kind and tender father, and as ſubjects rejoice in a wiſe and good prince.

The goodneſs of God gives us a lovely character of him, makes him ſo good a Father, ſo gracious a Governor of men, that if there were no ſuch being in the world, it were infinitely deſirable to mankind that there ſhould be: He is ſuch an one, *Qualem omnes cuperent ſi deeſſet;* "As, if he were wanting, all men ought to "wiſh for." The being of God is ſo comfortable, ſo convenient, ſo neceſſary to the felicity of mankind, that, as Tully admirably ſays, *Dii immortales ad uſum hominum fabricati penè videantur;* "If God were not a "neceſſary being of himſelf, he might almoſt ſeem to "be made on purpoſe for the uſe and benefit of men:" ſo that Atheiſm is not only an inſtance of the moſt horrible impiety, but of the greateſt ſtupidity; and, for men to glory in their diſbelief of a God, is like the rejoicing

joicing and triumph of a furious and beſotted multitude, in the murder of a wiſe and good prince, the greateſt calamity and confuſion that could poſſibly have befallen them.

If the evidence of God's being were not ſo clear as it is, yet the conſideration of his goodneſs ought to check all inclination to Atheiſm and infidelity; for, if he be as good as he is repreſented to us, both by natural light, and divine revelation, (and he is ſo, as ſure as he is) if he tender our welfare, and deſire our happineſs, as much as we ourſelves can do, and uſe all wiſe ways and proper means to bring it about; then it is plainly every man's intereſt, even thine, O ſinner! to whom, after all thy provocations, he is willing to be reconciled, that there ſhould be ſuch a being as God is; and whenever thou comeſt to thyſelf, thou wilt be ſenſible of thy want of him, and thy *ſoul will thirſt for God, even the living God, and pant after him, as the hart pants after the water-brooks;* in the day of thy affliction and calamity, *when diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon thee,* thou wilt flee to God for refuge, and ſhelter thyſelf under his protection, and wouldeſt not, for all the world, but there were ſuch a being in it to help and deliver thee. *Deos nemo ſanus timet,* ſays Seneca, *furor eſt metuere ſalutaria;* "No man in his wits is afraid there is a God: it "is a madneſs to fear that which is ſo much for our be-"neſit and advantage." Human nature is conſcious to itſelf of its own weakneſs and inſufficiency, and of its neceſſary dependence upon ſomething without itſelf, for its happineſs; and therefore, in great extremity and diſtreſs, the Atheiſt himſelf hath naturally recourſe to him; and he who denied and rejected him in his proſperity, clings to him in adverſity, as his *only ſupport and preſent help in time of trouble.* And this is a ſure indication, that theſe men, after all their endeavours to impoſe upon themſelves, have not been able wholly to extinguiſh in their minds the belief of God, and his goodneſs; nay, it is a ſign, that at the bottom of their hearts, they have a firm perſuaſion of his goodneſs, when, after all their inſolent defiance of him, they have the confidence to apply themſelves to him for *mercy and help, in time of need:* and therefore our hearts ought to

riſe with indignation againſt thoſe who go about to perſuade the belief of a thing ſo prejudicial to our intereſt, to take away *the light of our eyes, and the breath of our noſtrils*, and to rob us of all the comfort and ſupport, which the belief of an infinite power, conducted by infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, is apt to afford to mankind.

II. We ſhould take great care of perverting and abuſing this great goodneſs, by vain confidence and preſumption. This is a provocation of an high nature, which the ſcripture calls *turning the grace of God into wantonneſs*; making that an encouragement to ſin, which is one of the ſtrongeſt arguments in the world againſt it. God is infinitely good and merciful: but we muſt not therefore think that he is fond and indulgent to our faults; but, on the contrary, becauſe he is good, he cannot but hate evil. So the ſcripture every where tells us, that *he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; that the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil: He is not a God that hath pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall evil dwell with him: The fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in his ſight: he hateth all the workers of iniquity.* He is ready to ſhew mercy to thoſe who are qualified for it by repentance, and reſolution of a better courſe: but, as long as we continue impenitent, God is implacable, and will deal with us according to the tenor of his laws, and the deſert of our doings. Deſpair is a great ſin, but preſumption is a greater; deſpair doubts of the goodneſs of God, but preſumption abuſeth it; deſpair diſbelieves, but preſumption perverts the beſt thing in the world to a quite contrary purpoſe from what it was intended.

III. The conſideration of God's goodneſs is a mighty comfort and relief to our minds, under all our fears and troubles. Great are the fears and jealouſies of many devout minds concerning God's love to them, and their everlaſting condition; which are commonly founded in one of theſe two cauſes, a melancholy temper, or miſtaken notions and apprehenſions of God; and very often theſe two meet together, and hinder the cure and removal of one another.

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Melancholy, as it is an effect of bodily temper, is a diſeaſe not to be cured by reaſon and argument, but by phyſick and time: but the miſtakes which men have entertained concerning God, if they be not ſet on and heightened by melancholy, (as many times they are) may be rectified by a true repreſentation of the goodneſs of God, confirmed by reaſon and ſcripture. Many good men have had very hard and injurious thoughts of God inſtilled into them, from doctrines too commonly taught and received; as if he did not ſincerely deſire the happineſs of his creatures, but had from all eternity decreed to make the greateſt part of mankind, with a ſecret purpoſe and deſign to make them miſerable, and, conſequently, were not ſerious and in good earneſt in his invitations and exhortations of ſinners to repentance; and it is no wonder if ſuch jealouſies as theſe concerning God, make men doubtful whether God love them, and very ſcrupulous and anxious about their everlaſting condition.

I have already told you, that theſe harſh doctrines have no manner of foundation, either in reaſon or ſcripture; that God earneſtly deſires our happineſs, and affords us ſufficient means to that end; that he bears a more hearty good will to us, than any man does to his friend, or any father upon earth ever did to his deareſt child; in compariſon of which, the greateſt affection of men to thoſe whom they love beſt, is *but as the drop of the bucket, as the very ſmall duſt upon the balance.* If we have right apprehenſions of God's goodneſs, we can have no temptation to deſpair of his kind and merciful intentions to us, provided we be but careful of our duty to him, and do ſincerely repent and forſake our ſins. Plainer declarations no word can make, than thoſe we meet with in the holy ſcriptures, that *God hath no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs and live; that he would have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth; that he is long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance; that he that confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſin, ſhall have mercy; that if the wicked forſake his ways, and*

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the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, he will have mercy, and will abundantly pardon.

As for outward calamities and afflictions, the conſideration of God's goodneſs is a firm ground of conſolation to us, giving us aſſurance, that God will either prevent them by his providence, or ſupport us under them, or reſcue us out of them, or turn them to our greater good and happineſs in this world, or the next. St. Paul ſpeaks of it as the firm belief and perſuaſion of all good men, that in the iſſue, all afflictions ſhould prove to their advantage: *We know*, ſays he, *that all things ſhall work together for good to them that love God.* And one of the greateſt evidences of our love to God, is a firm belief and perſuaſion of his goodneſs: if we believe his goodneſs, we cannot but love him; and if we *love him, all things ſhall work together for our good.*

And this is a great cordial to thoſe who are under grievous perſecutions and ſufferings, which is the caſe of our brethren in a neighbouring nation, and may come to be ours, God knows how ſoon. But though the malice of men be great, and backed with a power not to be controlled by any viſible means, and therefore likely to continue; yet the goodneſs of God is greater than the malice of men, and of a longer duration and continuance. And thus David comforted himſelf when he was perſecuted by Saul; Pſal. lii 1. *Why boaſteſt thou thyſelf in miſchief, O mighty man? the goodneſs of God endureth continually.* The perſecution which Saul raiſed againſt him was very powerful, and laſted a long time; but he comforts himſelf with this, that *the goodneſs of God endures for ever.*

IV. The conſideration of God's goodneſs, is a powerful motive and argument to ſeveral duties.

1. To the love of God. And this is the moſt proper and natural effect and operation of the goodneſs of God upon our minds. Several of the divine attributes are very awful, but goodneſs is amiable; and, without this, nothing elſe is ſo. Power and wiſdom may command dread and admiration; but nothing but goodneſs can challenge our love and affection. Goodneſs is amiable for itſelf, though no benefit and advantage ſhould from thence redound to us: but when we find the comfort-

fortable effects of it, when *the riches of God's goodneſs, and long-ſuffering, and forbearance* are laid out upon us, when we live upon that goodneſs, and are indebted to it for all that we have and hope for; this is a much greater endearment to us of that excellency and perfection which was amiable for itſelf. We cannot but love him who is good, and does us good; whoſe goodneſs extends to all his creatures, but is exerciſed in ſo peculiar a manner towards the ſons of men, that it is called love; and if God vouchſafe to love us, well may this be the *firſt and great commandment, thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind.*

2. The conſideration of God's goodneſs is likewiſe an argument to us to fear him; not as a ſlave does his maſter, but as a child does his father, who the more he loves him, the more afraid he is to offend him. *There is forgiveneſs with thee,* ſays the Pſalmiſt, *that thou mayeſt be feared:* Becauſe God is ready to forgive, we ſhould be afraid to offend. *Men ſhall fear the Lord, and his goodneſs,* ſaith the Prophet, Hoſea iii. 5. And, indeed, nothing is more to be dreaded, than deſpiſed goodneſs, and abuſed patience, which turns into fury and vengeance: *Deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs, and long-ſuffering, and forbearance,* ſays the Apoſtle, *and treaſureſt up to thyſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?*

3. The conſideration of God's goodneſs is a powerful motive to obedience to his laws, *and,* as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it, *to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work.* This argument Samuel uſeth to the people of Iſrael, to perſuade them to obedience; 1 Sam. xii. 24. *Only fear the Lord, and ſerve him in truth with all your heart; for conſider how great things he hath done for you.*

And, indeed, the laws which God hath given us, are none of the leaſt inſtances of his goodneſs to us, ſince they all tend to our good, and are proper cauſes and means of our happine's: ſo that, in challenging our obedience to his laws, as acknowledgments of our obligation to him for his benefits, he lays a new obligation, and confers a greater benefit upon us. All that

his

his laws require of us, is to do that which is beſt for ourſelves, and does moſt directly conduce to our own welfare and happineſs. Conſidering our infinite obligations to God, he might have challenged our obedience to the ſevereſt and harſheſt laws he could have impoſed upon us: ſo that, as the ſervants ſaid to Naaman, *Had the prophet bid thee to do ſome great thing, wouldeſt thou not have done it? how much more, when he hath only ſaid, waſh, and be clean?* If God had required of us things very grievous and burdenſome; in love and gratitude to him, we ought to have yielded a ready and chearful obedience to ſuch commands: how much more, when he hath only ſaid, *Do this, and be happy?* In teſtimony of your love to me, do theſe things which are the greateſt kindneſs and benefit to yourſelves.

4. The goodneſs of God ſhould lead men to repentance. One of the greateſt aggravations of our ſins is, that we offend againſt ſo much goodneſs, and make ſo bad a requital for it; *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe!* The proper tendency of God's goodneſs and patience to ſinners, is to bring them to a ſenſe of their miſcarriage, and to a reſolution of a better courſe. When we reflect upon the bleſſings and favours of God, and his continual goodneſs to us, can we chuſe but be aſhamed of our terrible ingratitude and diſobedience? Nothing is more apt to make an ingenuous nature to relent, than the ſenſe of undeſerved kindneſs; that God ſhould be ſo good to us, who are evil and unthankful to him; that though we be enemies to him, yet *when we hunger, he feeds us; when we thirſt, he gives us to drink; heaping*, as it were, *coals of fire on our heads*, on purpoſe to melt us into repentance, and to overcome our evil by his goodneſs.

5. The conſideration of God's goodneſs is a firm ground of truſt and confidence. What may we not hope and aſſuredly expect from immenſe and boundleſs goodneſs? If we have right apprehenſions of the goodneſs of God, we cannot poſſibly diſtruſt him, or doubt of the performance of thoſe gracious promiſes which he hath made to us; the ſame goodneſs which inclined him to make ſuch promiſes, will effectually engage him to make them good. If God be ſo good as he hath declare

clared himſelf, why ſhould we think that he will not help us in our need, and relieve us in our diſtreſs, and comfort us in our afflictions and ſorrows? If we may, with confidence, rely upon any thing to confer good upon us, and to preſerve and deliver us from evil, we may truſt infinite goodneſs.

6. The goodneſs of God is likewiſe an argument to us to patience and contentedneſs with every condition. If the hand of God be ſevere and heavy upon us in any affliction, we may be aſſured that it is not without great cauſe that ſo much goodneſs is ſo highly offended and diſpleaſed with us; that he deſigns our good in all the evil he ſends to us, and does not chaſten us for his pleaſure, but for our profit: that we are the cauſe of our own ſufferings, and *our ſins ſeparate between God and us, and with-hold good things from us*; that, in the final iſſue and reſult of things, *all things ſhall work together for good* to us; and therefore we ought not to be diſcontented at any thing which will certainly end in our happineſs.

Let us imitate the goodneſs of God. The higheſt perfection of the beſt and moſt perfect being is worthy to be our pattern: this the ſcripture frequently propoſeth to us; Matth. v. 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect.* How is that? In being good, and kind, and merciful, as God is: *But I ſay unto you*, ſays our Lord, *love your enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you; that ye may be the children of your father which is in heaven: for he maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil, and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt, and on the unjuſt:* And then it follows, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect.* The ſame pattern St. Paul propoſeth to us, Eph. iv. 32. and chap. v. 1. *Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Chriſt's ſake, hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love.* We cannot, in any thing, reſemble God more, than in goodneſs, and kindneſs, and mercy, and in a readineſs to forgive thoſe who have been injurious to us, and to be reconciled to them.

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Let us then often contemplate this perfection of God, and repreſent it to our minds, that, by the frequent contemplation of it, we may be transformed into the image of the divine goodneſs. Is God ſo good to his creatures? With how much greater reaſon ſhould we be ſo to our fellow-creatures? Is God good to us? Let us imitate his univerſal goodneſs, by endeavouring the good of mankind, and, as much as in us lies, of the whole creation of God. What God is to us, and what we would have him ſtill be to us, that let us be to others. We are infinitely beholden to this perfection of God for all that we are, and for all that we enjoy, and for all that we expect; and therefore we have all the reaſon in the world to admire and imitate it. Let this pattern of the divine goodneſs be continually before us, that we may be ſtill faſhioning ourſelves in the temper of our minds, and in the actions of our lives, to a likeneſs and conformity to it.

Laſtly, The conſideration of the divine goodneſs ſhould excite our praiſe and thankfulneſs: this is a great duty, to the performance whereof we ſhould ſummon all the powers and faculties of our ſouls; as the holy Pſalmiſt does, Pſal. ciii. 1. 2. *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul; and all that is within me, bleſs his holy name. Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and forget not all his benefits.* And we ſhould invite all others to the ſame work, as the ſame devout Pſalmiſt frequently does; Pſal. cvi. 1. *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever.* And, Pſal. cvii. 8. *Oh, that men would praiſe the Lord for his goodneſs, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*

And we had need to be often called upon to this duty to which we have a peculiar backwardneſs. Neceſſity drives us to prayer and ſends us to God for the ſupply of our wants; but praiſe and thankſgiving is a duty which depends upon our gratitude and ingenuity; and nothing ſooner wears off than the ſenſe of kindneſs and benefits. We are very apt to forget the bleſſings of God, not ſo much from a bad memory, as from a bad nature; to forget the greateſt bleſſings, the continuance whereof ſhould continually put us in mind of them, the bleſſings of our beings. So God complains

of

of his people, Deut. xxxii. 18. *Of the God that formed thee thou haſt been unmindful:* The dignity and excellency of our being, above all the creatures of this viſible world; Job xxxv. 10, 11. *None ſaith, where is God my maker, who teacheth us more than the beaſts of the earth, and maketh us wiſer than the fowls of heaven?* The daily comforts and bleſſings of our lives, which we can continually receive, without almoſt ever looking up to the hand that gives them. So God complains by the Prophet Hoſea, chap. ii. 8. *She knew not that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her ſilver and gold.* And is it not ſhameful to ſee how at the moſt plentiful tables, the giving of God thanks is almoſt grown out of faſhion? as if men were aſhamed to own from whence theſe bleſſings came. When thanks is all God expects from us, can we not afford to give him that? *Do ye thus requite the Lord, fooliſh people, and unwiſe?* It is juſt with God to take away his bleſſings from us, if we deny him this eaſy tribute of praiſe and thankſgiving.

It is a ſign men are unfit for heaven, when they are backward to that which is the proper work and employment of the bleſſed ſpirits above: therefore, as ever we hope to come thither, let us begin this work here, and inure ourſelves to that which will be the great buſineſs of all eternity: let us, with *the four and twenty elders* in the Revelation, *fall down before him that ſits on the throne, and worſhip him that liveth for ever and ever, and caſt our crowns before the throne;* (that is, caſt ourſelves) and aſcribe all glory to God, ſaying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou haſt made all things, and for thy pleaſure they are, and were created:*

To him therefore, the infinite and inexhauſtible fountain of goodneſs, the Father of mercies, and the God of all conſolation, who gave us ſuch excellent beings, having made us little lower than the angels, and crowned us with glory and honour, who hath been pleaſed to ſtamp upon us the image of his own goodneſs, and thereby made us partakers of a divine nature, communicating to us not only of the effects of his goodneſs, but in

some measure and degree, of the perfection itself; to him, who gives us all things richly to enjoy, which pertain to life and godliness, and hath made such abundant provision not only for our comfort and convenience in this present life, but for our unspeakable happiness to all eternity; to him, who designed this happiness to us from all eternity, and whose mercy and goodness to us endures for ever, who, when by wilful transgressions and disobedience we had plunged ourselves into a state of sin and misery, and had forfeited that happiness which we were designed to, was pleased to restore us to a new capacity of it, by sending his only Son to take our nature, with the miseries and infirmities of it, to live among us, and to die for us; in a word, to him who is infinitely good to us, not only contrary to our deserts, but beyond our hopes, who renews his mercy upon us every morning, and is patient, though we provoke him every day, who preserves and provides for us, and spares us continually, who is always willing, always watchful, and never weary to do us good; to him be all glory and honour, adoration and praise, love and obedience, now and for ever.

SERMON CXLVII.

The mercy of God.

NUMB. xiv. 18.

The Lord is long-suffering, and of great mercy.

I Have considered God's goodness in general. There are two eminent branches of it, his patience and mercy. The patience of God in his goodness to them that are guilty, in deferring or moderating their deserved punishment: the mercy of God is his goodness to them that are, or may be miserable. It is the last of these two I design to discourse of at this time; in doing of which, I shall enquire,

1. What

1. What we are to underſtand by the mercy of God.
2. Shew you, that this perfection belongs to God.
3. Conſider the degree of it, that God is of *great mercy*.

Firſt, What we are to underſtand by the mercy of God.

I told you, it is his goodneſs to them that are in miſery, or liable to it; that is, that are in danger of it, or have deſerved it. It is mercy, to prevent the miſery that we are liable to, and which may befal us, though it be not actually upon us. It is mercy, to defer the miſery that we deſerve, or mitigate it; and this is, properly, patience and forbearance. It is mercy, to relieve thoſe that are in miſery, to ſuport or comfort them. It is mercy, to remit the miſery we deſerve, and, by pardon and forgiveneſs, to remove and take away the obligation to puniſhment.

Thus the mercy of God is uſually, in ſcripture, ſet forth to us, by the affection of pity and compaſſion; which is an affection that cauſeth a ſenſible commotion and diſturbance in us, upon the apprehenſion of ſome great evil that lies upon another, or hangs over him. Hence it is that God is ſaid in ſcripture, to be grieved and afflicted for the miſeries of men; *his bowels* are ſaid *to ſound*, and *his heart to turn within him*. But though God is pleaſed in this manner to ſet forth his mercy and tenderneſs towards us, yet we muſt take heed how we clothe the divine nature with the infirmities of human paſſions. We muſt not meaſure the perfection of God by the expreſſions of his condeſcenſion; and, becauſe he ſtoops to our weakneſs, level him to our infirmities. When God is ſaid to pity us, we muſt take away the imperfection of this paſſion, the commotion and diſturbance of it, and not imagine any ſuch thing in God; but we are to conceive, that the mercy and compaſſion of God, without producing the diſquiet, do produce the effects of the moſt ſenſible pity.

Secondly, That this perfection belongs to God.

All the arguments that I uſed to prove the goodneſs of God, from the acknowledgment of natural light, and from ſcripture and reaſon, ſerve to prove that he is merciful; becauſe the mercy of God is an eminent branch

of his goodneſs. I will only produce ſome of thoſe many texts of ſcripture which attribute this perfection to God. Exod. xxxiv. 6. *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious.* Deut. iv. 31. *The Lord thy God is a merciful God.* 2 Chron. xxxiv. 9. *The Lord your God is gracious and merciful.* Neh. ix. 17. *Ready to pardon, gracious and merciful.* Pſal. xxv. 10. *All the paths of the Lord are mercy.* Pſal. lxii. 12. *Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy.* Pſal. ciii. 8. *Merciful and gracious.* Pſal. cxxx. 7. *With the Lord there is mercy.* And ſo, Jer. iii. 12. Joel ii. 13. Jonah iv. 2. Luke vi. 36. *Be ye therefore merciful, as your father alſo is merciful.* The ſcripture ſpeaks of this as moſt natural to him; 2 Cor. i. 3. he is called *the father of mercies.* But when he puniſheth, he doth, as it were, relinquiſh his nature, and do a *ſtrange work. The Lord will wait, that he may be gracious,* Iſa. xxx. 18. God paſſeth by opportunities of puniſhing, but his mercy takes opportunity to diſplay itſelf: *He waits to be gracious.* To afflict or puniſh, is a work that God is unwilling to, that he takes no pleaſure in; Lam. iii. 33. *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.* But mercy is a work that he delights in; Micah vii. 18. *He delighteth in mercy.* When God ſhews mercy, he does it with pleaſure and delight; he is ſaid to *rejoice over his people, to do them good.* Thoſe attributes that declare God's goodneſs, as when he is ſaid to be gracious, or merciful, and long ſuffering, they ſhew what God is in himſelf, and delights to be: thoſe which declare his wrath and ſeverity, ſhew what he is upon provocation, and the occaſion of ſin; not what he chuſeth to be, but what we do, as it were, compel and neceſſitate him to be.

Thirdly, For the degree of it; that God is a God of *great mercy.*

The ſcripture doth delight to advance the mercy of God, and does uſe great variety of expreſſion to magnify it: it ſpeaks of the greatneſs of his mercy; Numb. xiv. 18. *According unto the greatneſs of thy mercy.* 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. *Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great.* It is called an abundant mercy; 1 Pet. i. 3. *According to his abundant mercy.*

Pſal.

Pſal. ciii. 8. he is ſaid to be *plenteous in mercy*; and *rich in mercy*, Eph. ii. 4. Pſal. v. 7. he ſpeaks of *the multitude of God's mercies*; and of the variety of them, Neh. ix. 19. *In thy manifold mercies thou forſakeſt them not.* So many are they, that we are ſaid to be ſurrounded and compaſſed about on every ſide with them; Pſal. ciii. 4. *Who crowneth thee with loving kindneſs, and tender mercies.*

And yet, further, to ſet forth the greatneſs of them, the ſcripture uſeth all dimenſions. Height; Pſal. lvii. 10. *Thy mercy is great unto the heavens.* Nay, higher yet; Pſal. cviii. 4. *Thy mercy is great above the heavens.* For the latitude and extent of it, it is as large as the earth, and extends to all the creatures in it; Pſal. cxix. 64 *The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy.* Pſal. cxlv. 9. *His tender mercies are over all his works.* For the length, or duration and continuance of it; Exod. xxxiv. 7. *Laying up mercy in ſtore for thouſands of generations*, one after another. Nay, it is of a longer continuance; Pſal. cxviii. it is ſeveral times repeated, that *his mercy endureth for ever.*

And, to ſhew the intenſe degree of this affection of mercy or pity, the ſcripture uſeth ſeveral emphatical expreſſions to ſet it forth to us. The ſcripture ſpeaks of the tender mercies of God; Pſal. xxv. *Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies.* Yea, of the multitude of theſe; Pſal. li. 1. *According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my tranſgreſſions.* Jam. v. 11. *The Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.* They are called God's bowels, which are the tendereſt parts, and apt to yern and ſtir in us when any affections of love and pity are excited; Iſa. lxiii. 15. *Where is the ſounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? are they reſtrained?* Luke i. 78. *Through the tender mercy of our God;* ſo it is in our tranſlation: but, if we render it from the original, it is, *through the bowels of the mercies of our God.* How doth God condeſcend, in thoſe pathetical expreſſions which he uſeth concerning his people? Hoſ. xi. 8. *How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? how ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael? how ſhall I make thee as Admah? how ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kin-*

dled together. Nay, to expreſs his tender ſenſe of our miſeries and ſufferings, he is repreſented as being afflicted with us, and bearing a part in our ſufferings, Iſa. lxiii. 9. *In all their afflictions he was afflicted.*

The compaſſions of God are compared to the tendereſt affections among men: to that of a father towards his children; Pſal. ciii. 13. *Like as a father pitieth his children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* Nay, to the compaſſions of a mother towards her infant; Iſa. xlix. 15. *Can a woman forget her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the ſon of her womb?* Yea, ſhe may, it is poſſible though moſt unlikely: but though a mother may turn unnatural, yet God cannot be unmerciful.

In ſhort, the ſcripture doth every where magnify the mercy of God, and ſpeak of it with all poſſible advantage; as if the divine nature, which doth in all perfections excel all others, did in this excel itſelf. The ſcripture ſpeaks of it, as if God was wholly taken up with it, as if it was his conſtant exerciſe and employment; ſo that in compariſon of it, he doth hardly diſplay any other excellency; Pſal. xxv. 10. *All the paths of the Lord are mercy;* as if, in this world, God had a deſign to advance his mercy above his other attributes. The mercy of God is now in the throne; this is the day of mercy; and God doth diſplay it, many times, with a ſeeming diſhonour to his other attributes, his juſtice, and holineſs, and truth. His juſtice; this makes Job complain of the long life and proſperity of the wicked; Job xxi. 7. *Wherefore do the wicked live, yea, become old?* &c. His holineſs; this makes the Prophet expoſtulate with God, Hab. i. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canſt not look on iniquity: wherefore lookeſt thou upon them that deal treacherouſly, and holdeſt thy tongue?* &c. And the truth of God; this makes Jonah complain, as if God's mercies were ſuch as did make ſome reflection upon his truth, Jonah iv. 2.

But, that we may have more diſtinct apprehenſions of the greatneſs and number of God's mercies, I will diſtribute them into kinds, and rank them under ſeveral heads. It is mercy, to prevent thoſe evils and miſeries that we are liable to: it is mercy, to defer thoſe that we have

have deſerved, or to mitigate them: it is mercy, to ſupport and comfort us when miſery is upon us: it is mercy, to deliver us from them: but the greateſt mercy of all is, to remit the evil and miſery we have deſerved, by pardon and forgiveneſs, to remove and take away the obligation to puniſhment. So that the mercy of God may be reduced to theſe five heads:

I. Preventing mercy. Many evils and miſeries which we are liable to, God prevents them at a great diſtance; and when they are coming towards us, he ſtops them, or turns them another way. The merciful providence of God, and thoſe inviſible guards which protect us, do divert many evils from us, which fall upon others. We ſeldom take notice of God's preventing mercy; we are not apt to be ſenſible how great a mercy it is to be freed from thoſe ſtraits and neceſſities, thoſe pains and diſeaſes of body, thoſe inward racks and horrors which others are preſſed withal, and labour under. When any evil or miſery is upon us, would we not reckon it a mercy to be reſcued and delivered from it? And is it not a greater mercy that we never felt it? Does not that man owe more to his phyſician, who prevents his ſickneſs and diſtemper, than he, who, after the weakneſs and languiſhing, the pains and tortures of ſeveral months, is at length cured by him?

II. Forbearing mercy. And this is the patience of God, which conſiſts in the deferring or moderating of our deſerved puniſhment. Hence it is, that *ſlow to anger, and of great mercy*, do ſo often go together. But this I ſhall ſpeak to hereafter in ſome particular diſcourſes.

III. Comforting mercy; 2 Cor. i. 3. *The father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.* The ſcripture repreſents God as very merciful, in comforting and ſupporting thoſe that are afflicted and caſt down: hence are thoſe expreſſions of *putting his arms under us; bearing us up; ſpeaking comfortably; viſiting us with his loving kindneſs*: which ſignify God's merciful regard to thoſe who are in miſery and diſtreſs.

IV. His relieving mercy, in ſupplying thoſe that are in want, and delivering thoſe that are in trouble. God doth, many times, exerciſe men with trouble and afflictions,

flictions, with a very gracious and merciful design, to prevent greater evils, which men would otherwise bring upon themselves. Afflictions are a merciful invention of heaven to do us that good, which nothing else can; they awaken us to a sense of God, and of ourselves, to a consideration of the evil of our ways: they make us to take notice of God, to seek him, and to enquire after him. God doth, as it were, by afflictions, throw men upon their backs, to make them look up to heaven. Hos. v. 15. *In their affliction they will seek me early.* Psal. lxxviii. 34. *When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and enquired early after God.* But God does not delight in this; *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.* When afflictions have accomplished their work, and obtained their end upon us, God is very ready to remove them, and command deliverance for us; Isa. liv. 7, 8. *For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy redeemer.*

V. Pardoning mercy. And here the greatness and fulness of God's mercy appears, because our sins are great: Psal. lxxviii. 38. *Being full of compassion, he forgave their iniquity.* And the multitude of God's mercies, because our sins are many; Psal. li. 1. *Have mercy upon me O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.* Exod. xxxiv. 9. *He is said to pardon iniquity, transgression and sin.* How manifold are his mercies, to forgive all our sins, of what kind soever! The mercy of God to us, in pardoning our sins, is matter of astonishment and admiration; Micah vii. 18. *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity!* But especially if we consider by what means our pardon is procured; by transferring our guilt upon the most innocent person, the Son of God, and making him *to bear our iniquities*, and to suffer the wrath of God which was due to us. The admirable contrivance of God's mercy appears in this dispensation; this shews *the riches of his grace*, that he should be at so much cost to purchase our pardon; *Not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the*

the precious blood of his own Son, Eph. i. 6. 7. *To the praiſe of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveneſs of ſins, according to the riches of his grace.*

Having diſpatched the three particulars I propoſed to be ſpoken to, I ſhall ſhew what uſe we ought to make of this divine attribute.

Uſe 1. We ought with th nkfulneſs, to acknowledge and admire the great mercy of God to us. Let us view it in all its dimenſions: the height, and length, and breadth of it: in all the variety and kinds of it; the preventing mercy of God to many of us. Thoſe miſeries that lie upon others, it is mercy to us that we eſcaped them. It is mercy that ſpares us: *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not conſumed, and becauſe his compaſſions fail not.* It is mercy that mitigates our puniſhment, and makes it fall below the deſert of our ſins. It is mercy that comforts and ſupports us under any of thoſe evils that lie upon us, and that reſcues and delivers us from them: which way ſoever we look, we are encompaſſed with the mercies of God; they *compaſs us about on every ſide; we are crowned with loving kindneſs, and tender mercies.* It is mercy that feeds us, and clothes us, and that preſerves us. But, above all, we ſhould thankfully acknowledge and admire the pardoning mercy of God; Pſal. ciii. 1, 2, 3. where David does, as it were muſter up the mercies of God, and make a catalogue of them; he ſets the pardoning mercy in the front; *Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and all that is within me bleſs his holy name. Bleſs the Lord, O my ſoul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thy iniquities.*

If we look into ourſelves, and conſider our own temper and diſpoſition, how void of pity and bowels we are, how cruel, and hard-hearted, and inſolent, and revengeful; if we look abroad in the world, and ſee how *full the earth is of the habitations of cruelty,* we ſhall admire the mercy of God more, and think ourſelves more beholden to it. How many things muſt concur to make our hearts tender, and melt our ſpirits, and ſtir our bowels, to make us pitiful and compaſſionate? We

ſel-

ſeldom pity any, unleſs they be actually in miſery; nor all ſuch neither, unleſs the miſery they lie under be very great; nor then neither, unleſs the perſon that ſuffers be nearly related, and we be ſome ways concerned in his ſufferings; yea, many times not then neither upon a generous account, but as we are ſome ways obliged by intereſt and ſelf-love, and a dear regard to ourſelves, when we have ſuffered the like ourſelves, and have learned to pity others by our own ſufferings, or when in danger or probability to be in the like condition ourſelves; ſo many motives and obligations are neceſſary to awaken and ſtir up this affection in us. But God is merciful and pitiful to us out of the mere goodneſs of his nature; for few of theſe motives and conſiderations can have any place in him. This affection of pity and tenderneſs is ſtirred up in God by the mere preſence of the object, without any other inducement. The mercy of God, many times, doth not ſtay till we be actually miſerable, but looks forward a great way, and pities us at a great diſtance, and prevents our miſery. God doth not only pity us in great calamities, but conſiders thoſe leſſer evils that are upon us. God is merciful to us, when we have deſerved all the evils that are upon us; and far greater, when we are *leſs than the leaſt of all his mercies*, when we deſerved all the miſery that is upon us, and have, with violent hands, pulled it upon our own heads, and have been the authors and procurers of it to ourſelves. Though God, in reſpect of his nature, be at an infinite diſtance from us; yet his mercy is near to us, and he cannot poſſibly have any ſelf-intereſt in it. The divine nature is not liable to want, or injury, or ſuffering; he is ſecure of his own happineſs and fulneſs, and can neither wiſh the enlargement, nor fear the impairment of his eſtate; he can never ſtand in need of pity or relief from us, or any other, and yet he pities us.

Now, if we conſider the vaſt difference of this affection in God and us, how tender his mercies are, and how ſenſible his bowels, and yet we, who have ſo many arguments to move us to pity, how hard our hearts are, and how unapt to relent, as if we were *born of the rock*, and were the *offſpring of the nether milſtone*: Sure, when

when we duly consider this, we cannot but admire the mercy of God.

How cruel are we to creatures below us! with how little remorse can we kill a flea, or tread upon a worm! partly, because we are secure that they cannot hurt us, nor revenge themselves upon us; and, partly, because they are so despicable in our eyes, and so far below us, that they do not fall under the consideration of our pity. Look upward, proud man! and take notice of him who is above thee: thou didst not make the creatures below thee, as God did; there is but a finite distance between thee and the meanest creatures; but there is an infinite distance between thee and God. Man is a name of dignity, when we compare ourselves with other creatures; but compared to God *we are worms, and not men;* yea, we are nothing, yea, *less than nothing, and vanity.* How great then is the mercy of God, which regards us, who are so far below him, which takes into consideration such inconsiderable nothings as we are! We may say, with David, Psal. viii. 4. *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?* and, with Job, chap. vii. 17. *What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him, and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?*

And then, how hard do we find it to forgive those who have injured us? If any one have offended, or provoked us, how hard are we to be reconciled? how mindful of an injury? how do anger and revenge boil within us! how do we upbraid men with their faults? what vile and low submission do we require of them, before we will receive them into favour, and grant them peace? And if we forgive once, we think that is much; but if an offence and provocation be renewed often, we are inexorable. Even the disciples of our Saviour, after he had so emphatically taught them forgiveness, in the petition of the Lord's prayer, yet they had very narrow spirits as to this; Matth. xviii. 21. Peter comes to him, and asks him, *How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?* He thought that was much: And yet we have great obligations to pardoning and forgiving others, because we are obnoxious to God and one another: we shall many times

times ſtand in need of pardon from God and men; and it may be our own caſe; and when it is, we are too apt to be very indulgent to ourſelves, and conceive good hopes of the mercy of others; we would have our ignorance, and inadvertencies, and miſtakes, and all occaſions, and temptations, and provocations, conſidered; and when we have done amiſs, upon ſubmiſſion, and acknowledgment of our fault, we would be received into favour: but God, who is not at all liable to us, how ready he is to forgive! If we confeſs our ſins to him, he is merciful to forgive: He pardons freely; and ſuch are the condeſcenſions of his mercy, though he be the party offended, yet he offers pardon to us, and beſeeches us to be reconciled: If we do but come towards him, he runs to meet us, as in the parable of the prodigal, Luke xv. 20. What reaſon have we then thankfully to acknowledge and admire the mercy of God to us!

Uſe 2. The great mercy of God to us ſhould ſtir up in us ſhame and ſorrow for ſin. The judgments of God may break us; but the conſideration of God's mercy ſhould rather melt and diſſolve us into tears: Luke vii. 47. the woman that waſhed Chriſt's feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair, the account that our Saviour gives of the great affection that ſhe expreſſed to him, was, *ſhe loved much, becauſe much was forgiven her*; and ſhe grieved much, becauſe much was forgiven her.

Eſpecially, we ſhould ſorrow for thoſe ſins which have been committed by us after God's mercies received. Mercies after ſins, ſhould touch our hearts, and make us relent: it ſhould grieve us that we ſhould offend and provoke a God ſo gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and ſo ready to forgive: but ſin againſt mercies, and after we have received them, is attended with one of the greateſt aggravations of ſin. And, as mercy raiſes the guilt of our ſins, ſo it ſhould raiſe our ſorrow for them. No conſideration is more apt to work upon human nature, than that of kindneſs; and the greater mercy has been ſhewed to us, the greater our ſins, and the greater cauſe of ſorrow for them; contraries do illuſtrate, and ſet off one another; in the great goodneſs and mercy of God to us, we ſee the great evil of our ſins againſt him.

Every

Every sin has the nature of rebellion and disobedience; but sins against mercy have ingratitude in them. Whenever we break the laws of God, we rebel against our Sovereign; but as we sin against the mercies of God, we injure our Benefactor. This makes our sin to be horrid, and astonishing; Isa. i. 2. *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.* All the mercies of God are aggravations of our sins; 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8, 9. *And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul: and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight?* God reckons up all his mercies, and from them aggravates David's sin; 1 Kings xi. 9. he takes notice of all the unkind returns that we make to his mercy: and it is the worst temper in the world, not to be wrought upon by kindness, not to be melted by mercy: no greater evidence of a wicked heart, than that the mercies of God have no effects upon it; Isa. xxvi. 10. *Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.*

Use 3. Let us imitate the merciful nature of God. This branch of God's goodness is very proper for our imitation. The general exhortation of our Saviour, Matth. v. 48. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;* is more particularly expressed by St. Luke, chap. vi. 36. *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.* Men affect to make images, and impossible representations of God; but, as Seneca saith, *Crede Deos, cum propitii essent, fictiles fuisse.* We may draw this image and likeness of God; we may be gracious and merciful as he is. Christ, who was *the express image of his Father*, his whole life and undertaking was a continued work of mercy; *he went about doing good* to the souls of men, by preaching the gospel to them; and to the bodies of men, in healing all manner of diseases: there is nothing that he recom-

mends more to us in his gospel, than this spirit and temper; Matth. v. 7. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* How many parables doth he use, to set forth the mercy of God to us, with a design to draw us to the imitation of it? The parable of the prodigal, of the good Samaritan; of the servant to whom he forgave ten thousand talents. We should imitate God in this, in being tender and compassionate to those that are in misery.

This is a piece of natural, indispensible religion, to which positive and instituted religion must give way. Amos vi. 6. *I desired mercy, and not sacrifice;* which is twice cited and used by our Saviour. Micah vi. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what it is that the Lord thy God requires of thee; to do justice, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*

This is always one part of the description of a good man, that he is apt to pity the miseries and necessities of others; Psal. xxxvii. 26. *He is ever merciful, and lendeth.* He is far from cruelty, not only to men, but even to the brute creatures; Prov. xii. 10. *A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast.* There is nothing more contrary to the nature of God, than a cruel and savage disposition, not to be affected with the miseries and sufferings of others: how unlike is this to *the Father of mercies, and the God of consolation!* when we can see cruelty exercised, and our bowels not be stirred within us, nor our hearts be pricked; how unlike is this to God, who is *very pitiful, and of tender mercies!* but, to rejoice at the miseries of others, this is inhuman and barbarous. Hear how God threatens Edom for rejoicing at the miseries of his brother Jacob, Obad. ver. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. But, to delight to make others miserable, and to aggravate their sufferings, this is devilish, this is the temper of hell, and the very spirit of the destroyer.

It becomes man, above all other creatures, to be merciful, who hath had such ample and happy experience of God's mercy to him, and doth still continually stand in need of mercy from God. God hath been very merciful to us. Had it not been for the tender mercies of God to us, we had, all of us, long since been miserable.

able. Now, as we have received from God, we ſhould ſhew it to others. The Apoſtle uſeth this as an argument why we ſhould relieve thoſe that are in miſery and want, becauſe we have had ſuch experience of the mercy and love of God to us; 1 John iii. 16, 17. *Hereby perceive we the love of God, becauſe he laid down his life for us. But whoſo hath this world's good, and ſeeth his brother have need,* &c. *how dwelleth the love of God in him?* That man hath no ſenſe of the mercy of God abiding upon his heart, that is not merciful to his brother. And it is an argument why we ſhould forgive one another; Eph. iv. 32. *Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you.* Eph. v. 1. *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children.* Col. iii. 12, 13. *Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindneſs, humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, long-ſuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel againſt any: even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye.*

And we continually ſtand in need of mercy both from God and man. We are liable one to another, and in the change of human affairs, we may be all ſubject to one another by turns, and ſtand in need of one another's pity and compaſſion; and we muſt expect, that, *with what meaſure we mete to others, with the ſame it ſhall be meaſured to us again.* To reſtrain the cruelties, and check the inſolencies of men, God hath ſo ordered, in his providence, that very often, in this world, mens cruelties *return upon their own heads, and their violent dealings upon their own pates.* Bajazet meets with a Tamerlane.

But if men were not thus liable to one another, we all ſtand in need of mercy from God. If we be merciful to others in ſuffering, and forgive them that have injured us, God will be ſo to us, he will pardon our ſins to us: Prov. xvi. 6. *By mercy and truth iniquity is purged.* 2 Sam. xxii. 26. *With the merciful thou wilt ſhew thyſelf merciful.* Prov. xiv. 21. *He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.* Prov. xxi. 21. *He that followeth after righteouſneſs and mercy, findeth life.* Matth. vi. 14. *If ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly Fa-*

ther will alſo forgive you. But, on the other hand, if we be malicious and revengeful, and implacable to thoſe that have offended us, and inexorable to thoſe who deſire to be received to favour, and cruel to thoſe who lie at our mercy, hard-hearted to them that are in neceſſity; what can we expect, but that the mercy of God will leave us, that he will *forget to be gracious, and ſhut up in anger his tender mercy?* Matth. vi. 15. *If ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive your treſpaſſes.* That is a dreadful paſſage, St. James ii. 13. *He ſhall have judgment without mercy, that hath ſhewed no mercy.* How angry is the Lord with the ſervant who was ſo inexorable to his fellow-ſervant, after he had forgiven him ſo great a debt, as you find in the parable, Matth. xviii. 24. He owed him ten thouſand talents, and, upon his ſubmiſſion, and entreaty to have patience with him, he was moved with compaſſion, and looſed him, and forgave him all: but no ſooner had this favour been done to him by his Lord, but, going forth, he meets his fellow-ſervant, who owed him a ſmall, inconſiderable debt, an hundred pence; he lays hands on him, and takes him by the throat, and roundly demands payment of him: he falls down at his feet, and uſeth the ſame form of ſupplication that he had uſed to his Lord; but he rejects his requeſt, and puts him in priſon. Now, what ſaith the Lord to him? ver. 32, 33, 34. *O thou wicked ſervant, I forgave thee all that debt, becauſe thou deſiredſt me: Shouldeſt not thou alſo have had compaſſion on thy fellow ſervant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he ſhould pay all that was due unto him.* Now, what application doth our Saviour make of this? ver. 35. *So likewiſe ſhall my heavenly Father do alſo unto you, if ye, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother their treſpaſſes.*

God's readineſs to forgive us, ſhould be a powerful motive and argument to us to forgive others. The greateſt injuries that we can ſuffer from men, if we compare them to the ſins that we commit againſt God, they bear no proportion to them, neither in weight nor number; they are but as *an hundred pence to ten thouſand talents.* If we would be like God, we ſhould forgive the greateſt

eſt injuries; he pardoneth our ſins, though they be exceeding great; many injuries, though offences be renewed, and provocations multiplied: for ſo God doth to us; *He pardoneth iniquity, tranſgreſſion, and ſin*, Exod. xxxiv. 7. Iſa. lv. 7. *He will have mercy, he will abundantly pardon.* We would not have God only to forgive us *ſeven times*, but *ſeventy times ſeven*, as often as we offend him; ſo ſhould we forgive our brother.

And we ſhould not be backward to this work; God is *ready to forgive us*, Neh. ix. 17. And we ſhould do it heartily; not only in word, when we retain malice in our hearts, and while we ſay we forgive, carry on a ſecret deſign in our hearts of revenging ourſelves when we have opportunity: but we ſhould, *from our hearts, forgive every one*; for ſo God doth to us, who, when he forgives us, *caſts our iniquities behind his back, and throws them into the bottom of the ſea; and blots out our tranſgreſſion, ſo as to remember our iniquity no more.*

If we do not thus, every time we put up the petition to God, *Forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us*, we do not pray for mercy, but for judgment; we invoke his wrath, and do not put up a prayer, but a dreadful imprecation againſt ourſelves; we pronounce the ſentence of our own condemnation, and importune God not to forgive us.

Uſe 4. If the mercy of God be ſo great, this may comfort us againſt deſpair. Sinners are apt to be dejected, when they conſider their unworthineſs, the nature and number of their ſins, and the many heavy aggravations of them; they are apt to ſay with Cain, that their ſin is greater than can be forgiven. But do not look only upon thy ſins, but upon the mercies of God. Thou canſt not be too ſenſible of the evil of ſin, and of the deſert of it; but whilſt we aggravate our ſins, we muſt not leſſen the mercies of God. When we conſider the multitude of our ſins, we muſt conſider alſo the multitude of God's tender mercies: we have been great ſinners, and God is of great mercy; we have multiplied our provocations, and he multiplies to pardon.

Do but thou put thyſelf in a capacity of mercy, by repenting of thy ſins, and forſaking of them, and thou

haſt no reaſon to doubt but the mercy of God will receive thee; *If we confeſs our ſins, he is merciful and faithful to forgive them.* If we had offended man, as we have done God, we might deſpair of pardon; but it is *God*, and not *man*, that we have to deal with; and *his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts: but as the heavens are high above the earth, ſo are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts.*

We cannot be more injurious to God, than by hard thoughts of him, as if fury were in him, and, when we have provoked him, he were not to be appeaſed and reconciled to us. We diſparage the goodneſs and truth of God, when we diſtruſt thoſe gracious declarations which he has made of his mercy and goodneſs: if we do not think that he doth heartily pity and compaſſionate ſinners, and really deſire their happineſs. Doth not he condeſcend ſo low, as to repreſent himſelf afflicted for the miſeries of men, and to rejoice in the converſion of a ſinner? And ſhall not we believe that he is in good earneſt? Doth Chriſt weep over impenitent ſinners, becauſe they will not know the things of their peace? And canſt thou think he will not pardon thee, upon thy repentance? Is he grieved that men will undo themſelves, and will not be ſaved? And canſt thou think that he is unwilling to forgive? We cannot honour and glorify God more, than by entertaining great thoughts of his mercy. As we are ſaid to glorify God by our repentance, becauſe thereby we acknowledge God's holineſs and juſtice; ſo we glorify him by believing his mercy, becauſe we conceive a right opinion of his goodneſs and truth; we ſet to our ſeal, that God is merciful and true; Pſal. cxlvii. 11. it is ſaid, that *God takes pleaſure in them that hope in his mercy.* As he delights in mercy, ſo in our acknowledgments of it; that ſinners ſhould conceive great hopes of it, and believe him to be what he is. Provided thou doſt ſubmit to the terms of God's mercy, thou haſt no reaſon to deſpair of it: and he that thinks that his ſins are more, or greater than the mercy of God can pardon, muſt think that there may be more evil in the creature than there is goodneſs in God.

Uſe

Use 5. By way of caution againſt the preſumptuous ſinner. If there be any that treſpaſs upon the goodneſs of God, and preſume to encourage themſelves in ſin, upon the hopes of his mercy; let ſuch know, that God is juſt, as well as merciful. A God of all mercy is an idol, ſuch a God as men ſet up in their own imaginations, but not the true God, whom the ſcriptures deſcribe: to ſuch perſons the ſcripture deſcribes him after another manner; Nah i. 2. *God is jealous; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adverſaries, and reſerveth wrath for his enemies.* If any man abuſe the mercy of God, to the ſtrengthening of himſelf in his own wickedneſs, and *bleſs himſelf in his heart, ſaying, I ſhall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, and add drunkenneſs to thirſt; the Lord will not ſpare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealouſy ſhall ſmoke againſt that man, and all the curſes that are written in this book ſhall lie upon him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven,* Deut. xxix. 19. 20.

Though it be the nature of God to be merciful, yet the exerciſe of his mercy is regulated by his wiſdom; he will not be merciful to thoſe that deſpiſe his mercy, to thoſe that abuſe it, to thoſe that are reſolved to go on in their ſins to tempt his mercy, and make bold to ſay, let us ſin, that grace may abound. God deſigns his mercy for thoſe that are prepared to receive it; Iſa. lv. 7. *Let the wicked forſake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* The mercy of God is an enemy to ſin, as well as his juſtice; and it is no where offered to countenance ſin, but to convert the ſinner; and is not intended to encourage our impenitency, but our repentance. God hath no where ſaid that he will be merciful to thoſe, who, upon the ſcore of his mercy, are bold with him, and preſume to offend him; but *the mercy of the Lord is upon them that fear him, and keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them. There is forgiveneſs with him, that he may be feared,* but not that he may be deſpiſed and affronted. This is to contradict the very end of God's mercy, which is, to lead us

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to repentance, to engage us to leave our ſins, not to encourage us to continue in them.

Take heed then of abuſing the mercy of God: we cannot provoke the juſtice of God more, than by preſuming upon his mercy. This is the time of God's mercy; uſe this opportunity: if thou neglecteſt it, a day of juſtice and vengeance is coming; Rom. ii. 4. 5. *Deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, not knowing that the goodneſs of God leads to repentance? And treaſureſt up unto thyſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God?* Now is the manifeſtation of God's mercy; but there is a time a-coming, when the righteous judgment of God will be revealed againſt thoſe who abuſe his mercy, not knowing that the goodneſs of God leadeth to repentance. To think that the goodneſs of God was intended for any other end than to take us off from ſin, is a groſs and affected ignorance that will ruin us; and they who draw any concluſion from the mercy of God, which may harden them in their ſins, they are ſuch as the prophet ſpeaks of, Iſa. xxvii. 11. *A people of no underſtanding, therefore he that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them, will ſhew them no favour.* Mercy itſelf will rejoice in the ruin of thoſe that abuſe it, and it will aggravate their condemnation. There is no perſon towards whom God will be more ſeverely juſt, than towards ſuch. The juſtice of God, exaſperated and ſet on by his injured and abuſed mercy, like a razor ſet in oil, will have the keener edge, and be the ſharper for its ſmoothneſs. Thoſe that have made the mercy of God their enemy, muſt expect the worſt his juſtice can do unto them.

SER-

SERMON CXLVIII.

The patience of God.

2 PET. iii. 9.

The Lord is not ſlack concerning his promiſe, (as ſome men count ſlackneſs) but is long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

IN the beginning of this chapter the Apoſtle puts Chriſtians, to whom he writes, in mind of the predictions of the antient Prophets, and of the Apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour, concerning the general judgment of the world, which, by many, and, perhaps, by the Apoſtles themſelves, had been thought to be very near, and that it would preſently follow the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; but he tells them, that, before that, there would ariſe a certain ſect, or ſort of men, that would deride the expectation of a future judgment, deſigning, probably, the Carpocratians (a branch of that large ſect of the Gnoſticks) of whom St. Auſtin expreſly ſays, "That they denied the reſurrection, and, conſequently, "a future judgment." Theſe St. Peter calls ſcoffers, ver. 3. 4. *Knowing this firſt, that there ſhall come in the laſt days ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts, and ſaying, where is the promiſe of his coming?* The word is ἐπαγγελία, which ſignifies a declaration in general, whether it be by way of promiſe or threatning. What is become of that declaration of Chriſt, ſo frequently repeated in the goſpel, concerning his coming to judgment? for ſince the fathers fell aſleep, or, ſaying that the Fathers are fallen aſleep, except only that men die, and one generation ſucceeds another, all things continue as they were from the creation of the world; that

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is, the world continues ſtill as it was from the beginning, and there is no ſign of any ſuch change and alteration as is foretold. To this he anſwers two things:

1. That theſe ſcoffers, though they took themſelves to be wits, did betray great ignorance, both of the condition of the world, and of the nature of God: they talked very ignorantly concerning the world, when they ſaid, all things continued as they were from the creation of it, when ſo remarkable a change had already happened, as the deſtruction of it by water; and therefore the prediction concerning the deſtruction of it by fire, before the great and terrible day of judgment, was no ways incredible. And they ſhewed themſelves likewiſe very ignorant of the perfection of the divine nature; to which, being eternally the ſame, a thouſand years, and one day, are all one: and if God make good his word ſome thouſands of years hence, it will make no ſenſible difference concerning his eternal duration; it being no matter when a duration begins, which is never to have an end: ver. 8. *Be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years as one day.* This, it ſeems, was a common ſaying among the Jews, to ſignify, that to the eternity of God, no finite duration bears any proportion; and therefore, with regard to eternity, it is all one whether it be a thouſand years, or one day. The pſalmiſt hath an expreſſion much to the ſame purpoſe, Pſal. xc. 4. *For a thouſand years in thy ſight are but as yeſterday, when it is paſt, and as a watch in the night.* And the Son of Sirach likewiſe, Eccluſ. xviii. 10. *As a drop of water to the ſea, and as a grain of ſand to the ſea-ſhore, ſo are a thouſand years to the days of eternity.*

The like expreſſion we meet with in Heathen writers. To the Gods no time is long, ſaith Pythagoras: and Plutarch, the whole ſpace of man's life, to the Gods is as nothing. And, in his excellent diſcourſe of the ſlowneſs of the divine vengeance, (the very argument St. Peter is here upon) he hath this paſſage, "That a thouſand, or ten thouſand years, are but as an individual point to an infinite duration." And therefore, when the judgment is to be eternal, the delay of it, though it were for a thouſand years, is an objection of no force, a-

againſt either the certainty, or the terror of it; for, to eternity, all time is equally ſhort; and it matters not when the puniſhment of ſinners begins, if it ſhall never have an end.

2. But, becauſe the diſtance between the declaration of a future judgment, and the coming of it, though it be nothing to God, yet it ſeemed long to them; therefore he gives ſuch an account of it, as doth not in the leaſt impeach the truth and faithfulneſs of God, but is a clear argument and demonſtration of his goodneſs. Admitting what they ſaid to be true, that God delays judgment for a great while, yet this gives no ground to conclude that judgment will never be; but it ſhews the great goodneſs of God to ſinners, that he gives them ſo long a ſpace of repentance, that ſo they may prevent the terror of that day, whenever it comes, and, eſcape that dreadful ruin, which will certainly overtake, ſooner or later, all impenitent ſinners: *The Lord is not ſlack concerning his promiſe;* that is, as to the declaration which he hath made of a future judgment, *as ſome men count ſlackneſs;* that is, as if the delay of judgment were an argument it would never come. This is a falſe inference from the delay of puniſhment, and an ill interpretation of the goodneſs of God to ſinners, who bears long with them, and delays judgment, on purpoſe to give men time to repent, and, by repentance, to prevent their own eternal ruin: *God is not ſlack concerning his promiſe, as ſome men count ſlackneſs; but is long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance.* In the handling of theſe words, I ſhall do theſe three things:

Firſt, I ſhall conſider the patience and long-ſuffering of God, as it is an attribute and perfection of the divine nature; *God is long-ſuffering to us-ward.*

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew, that the patience of God, and the delay of judgment, is no juſt ground why ſinners ſhould hope for impunity, as the ſcoffers here foretold by the Apoſtle, argued, that becauſe our Lord delayeth his coming to judgment ſo long, therefore he would never come; *God is not ſlack concerning his promiſe, as ſome men count ſlackneſs.*

Thirdly,

Thirdly, I will consider the true reason of God's patience and long-suffering towards mankind, which the Apostle here gives; *He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

First, I will consider the patience and long-suffering of God towards mankind, as it is an attribute and perfection of the divine nature, *God is long-suffering to us-ward.* In the handling of this, I shall do these three things.

1. I shall shew what is meant by the patience and long-suffering of God.

2. That this is a perfection of the divine nature.

3. I shall give some proof and demonstration of the great patience and long-suffering of God to mankind.

I. What is meant by the patience and long-suffering of God.

The Hebrew word signifies one that keeps his anger long, or that is long before he is angry. In the New Testament it is sometimes expressed by the word ὑπομονὴ, which signifies God's forbearance, and patient waiting for our repentance; sometimes by the word ἀνοχὴ, which signifies God's holding in his wrath, and restraining himself from punishing; and sometimes by μακροθυμία, which signifies the extent of his patience, his long suffering, and forbearing for a long time the punishment due to sinnners.

So that the patience of God is his goodness to sinners, in deferring or moderating the punishment due to them for their sins; the deferring of deserved punishment in whole, or in part, which, if it be extended to a long time, it is properly his long suffering; and the moderating, as well as the deferring of the punishment due to sin, is an instance likewise of God's patience; and not only the deferring and moderating of temporal punishment, but the adjourning of the eternal misery of sinners, is a principal instance of God's patience; so that the patience of God takes in all that space of repentance which God affords to sinners in this life; nay, all temporal judgments and afflictions which befal sinners in this life, and are short of cutting them off, and turning them into hell, are comprehended in the patience of God. Whenever God

God punisheth, *it is of his great mercy* and patience *that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not.* I proceed to the

II. Thing I proposed, which was to shew, that patience is a perfection of the divine nature.

It is not necessarily due to us, but is due to the perfection of the divine nature, and essentially belongs to it: it is a principal branch of God's goodness, which is the highest and most glorious perfection of all other: and therefore we always find it in scripture, in the company of God's milder and sweeter attributes. When God would give the most perfect description of himself, and, as he says to Moses, *make all his glory to pass before us*, he usually does it by those attributes which declare his goodness; and patience is always one of them. Exod. xxxiv. 6. *The Lord passed by before Moses, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.* Psal. lxxxvi. 15. *But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.* Psal. ciii. 8. *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* And the same you find, Psal. cxlv. 8. Jonah iv. 2. Joel iii. 13.

Sometimes, indeed, you find a severer attribute added to these, as that *he will by no means clear the guilty*, Exod. xxxiv. 7. But it is always put in the last place; to declare to us, that God's goodness, and mercy, and patience are his first and primary perfections: and it is only when these fail, and have no effect upon us, but are abused by us, to the encouragement of ourselves in an impenitent course, that his justice takes place.

Nay, even among men, it is esteemed a perfection, to be able to forbear and to restrain our anger; passion is impotency and folly, but patience is power and wisdom. Prov. xiv. 29. *He that is slow to wrath, is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit, exalteth folly.* Prov. xvi. 32. *He that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.* Rom. xii. 21. *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.* To be impatient, is to be overcome; but, to forbear anger and revenge, is victory. Patience is an argument of great power and com-

mand of ourselves; and therefore God himself, who is the most powerful being, is slow to anger, and of infinite patience; and nothing doth more declare the power of God than his patience; that when he is provoked by such vile and despicable creatures as we are, he can with-hold his hand from destroying us. This is the argument which Moses useth, Numb. xiv. 17, 18. that the power of God doth so eminently appear in his patience; *And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, the Lord is gracious, and long-suffering.* And yet, power, where it is not restrained by wisdom and goodness, is a great temptation to anger; because, where there is power, there is something to back it, and make it good: and therefore the Psalmist doth recommend and set off the patience of God, from the consideration of his power; Psal. vii. 11. *God is strong, and patient; God is provoked every day: God is strong, and therefore patient;* or, he is infinitely patient, notwithstanding his almighty power to revenge the daily provocations of his creatures.

Among men, anger and weakness commonly go together; but they are ill matched, as is excellently observed by the son of Sirach, Ecclus. x. 18. *Pride was not made for man, nor furious anger for him that is born of a woman.* So that anger and impatience is every where unreasonable: where there is power, impatience is below it, and a thing too mean for omnipotency; and where there wants power, anger is above it: it is too much for a weak and impotent creature to be angry. Where there is power, anger is needless, and of no use; and where there is no power, it is vain, and to no purpose. So that patience is every where a perfection, both in God and man. I proceed to the

III. Thing I proposed, which was, to give some proof and demonstration of the great patience and long-suffering of God to mankind. And this will evidently appear, if we consider these two things:

1. How men deal with God.

2. How, notwithstanding this, God deals with them.

1*st*, How men deal with God. Every day we highly offend and provoke him, we grieve and weary him with our

our iniquities, as the expreſſion is in the Prophet, Iſa. xliii. 24. *Thou haſt made me to ſerve with thy ſins; thou haſt wearied me with thine iniquities.* Every ſin that we commit, is an affront to the divine Majeſty, and a contempt of his authority: by denying ſubmiſſion to his laws, we queſtion his omnipreſence, and ſay, *Doth God ſee? and is there knowledge in the Moſt High?* Or, if we acknowledge his omnipreſence, and that he regards what we do, the provocation is ſtill the greater; becauſe then we affront him to his face; we dare his juſtice, and, challenge his omnipotency, and *provoke the Lord to jealouſy*, as if *we were ſtronger than he.*

Is not God patient, when *the whole earth lies in wickedneſs*, and *the earth is overſpread with violence, and is full of the habitations of cruelty?* when he, who is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*, and is ſo highly offended at the ſins of men, hath yet the patience to look upon *them that deal treacherouſly, and to hold his peace? when the wicked perſecutes and devours the man that is more righteous than he?* when even that part of the world which profeſſeth the name of God and Chriſt, do, by their vile and abominable lives, *blaſpheme that holy and glorious name whereby they are called?*

Every moment God hath greater injuries done to him, and more affronts put upon him, than were ever offered to all the ſons of men: and, ſurely, provocations are trials of patience, eſpecially when they are ſo numerous, and ſo heinous: for, if offences riſe according to the dignity of the perſon injured, and the meanneſs of him that doth the injury; then no offences are ſo great as thoſe that are committed by men againſt God, no affronts like to thoſe which are offered to the divine Majeſty by the continual provocations of his creatures. And is not this an argument of God's patience, that the glorious Majeſty of heaven ſhould bear ſuch multiplied indignities from ſuch vile worms? that he, who is the former of all things, ſhould endure his own creatures to rebel againſt him, and the works of his hands to ſtrike at him? that he who is our great benefactor, ſhould put up ſuch affronts from thoſe who depend upon his bounty, and are maintained at his charge? that he, *in whoſe hands our breath is*, ſhould ſuffer men to breathe

out oaths, and curſes, and blaſphemies againſt him? Surely theſe prove the patience of God to purpoſe, and are equally trials and arguments of it.

2*dly*, The patience of God will farther appear, if we conſider how, notwithſtanding all this, God deals with us. He is patient to the whole world, in that he doth not turn us out of being, and *turn the wicked together into hell, with all the nations that forget God.* He is patient to the greateſt part of mankind, in that he makes but a few terrible examples of his juſtice, *that others may hear and fear*, and take warning by them. He is patient to particular perſons, in that, notwithſtanding our daily provocations, he prevents us daily with the bleſſing of his goodneſs, prolonging our lives, and vouchſafing ſo many favours to us, that, *by his great goodneſs, we may be led to repentance.*

But the patience of God will more illuſtriouſly appear, if we conſider theſe following particulars, which are ſo many evidences and inſtances of it.

I. That God is not obliged to ſpare and forbear us at all. It is patience, that he doth not ſurprize us in the very act of ſin, and let fly at us with a thunder-bolt ſo ſoon as ever we have offended; that the wrath of God doth not fall upon the intemperate perſon, as it did upon the Iſraelites, while the meat and drink is yet in their mouths: that a man is not ſtruck dead or mad whilſt he is telling a lie; that the ſoul of the prophane and falſe ſwearer does not expire with his oaths and perjuries.

II. That God ſpares us, when it is in his power ſo eaſily to ruin us; when he can with one word command us out of being, and, by cutting a ſunder one little thread, let us drop into hell. If God were diſpoſed to ſeverity, he could deal with us after another manner, and, as the expreſſion is in the Prophet, *eaſe himſelf of his adverſaries, and be avenged of his enemies.*

III. That God exerciſeth this patience to ſinners, *flagrante bello*, while they are up in arms againſt him, and committing hoſtilities upon him; he bears with us even when we are challenging his juſtice to puniſh us, and provoking his power to deſtroy us.

IV. That

IV. That he is so very slow and unwilling to punish, and to inflict his judgments upon us. As for eternal punishments, God defers them a long while, and by all proper ways and means endeavours to prevent them, and to bring us to repentance. And as for those temporal judgments which God inflicts upon sinners, he carries himself so, that we may plainly see all the signs of unwillingness that can be; he tries to prevent them; he is loth to set about this work; and when he does, it is with much reluctance; and then he is easily persuaded and prevailed withal not to do it; and when he does, he does it not rigorously, and to extremity; and he is soon taken off, after he is engaged in it: all which are great instances and evidences of his wonderful patience to sinners.

1. God's unwillingness to punish, appears, in that he labours to prevent punishment; and that he may effectually do this, he endeavours to prevent sin, the meritorious cause of God's judgments: to this end, he hath threatened it with severe punishments, that the dread of them may make us afraid to offend; and if this will not do, he does not yet give us over, but gives us a space of repentance, and invites us earnestly to turn to him, and thereby to prevent his judgments; he expostulates with sinners, and reasons the case with them, as if he were more concerned not to punish, than they are not to be punished: and thus, by his earnest desire of our repentance, he shews how little he desires our ruin.

2. He is long before he goes about this work. Judgment is, in scripture, called *his strange work*; as if he were not acquainted with it, and hardly knew how to go about it on the sudden. He is represented as not prepared for such a work; Deut. xxxii. 41. *If I whet my glittering sword*; as if the instruments of punishment were not ready for us. Nay, by a strange kind of condescension to our capacities, and to set forth to us the patience of God, and his slowness to wrath, after the manner of men, he is represented as keeping out of the way, that he may not be tempted to destroy us; Exod. xxxii. 2, 3. where he tells Moses, that he *would send an angel before them; for I will not go up in the midst of thee, lest I consume thee in the way.*

At works of mercy he is very ready and forward. When Daniel prayed for the deliverance of the people of Israel out of captivity, the angel tells him, that, *at the beginning of his supplication, the commandment came forth*, to bring him a promise of their deliverance. The mercy of God, many times, prevents our prayers, and out-runs our wishes and desires: but when he comes to affliction, he takes time to do it; he passeth by many provocations, and waits long in expectation, that, by our repentance, he will prevent his judgments: *He hearkened and heard*, saith God, in the Prophet Jeremiah, *but they spake not right; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, what have I done?* He is represented as waiting and listening, to hear if any penitent word would drop from them; he gives the sinner time to repent and reflect upon his actions, and to consider what he hath done, and space to reason himself into repentance. For this reason the judgments of God do often follow the sins of men at a great distance; otherwise he could easily make them mend their pace, and *consume us in a moment.*

3. When he goes about this work, he does it with much reluctance; Hosea xi. 8. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? Mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together.* He is represented as making many essays and offers before he came to it: Psal. cvi. 26. *Many a time lifted he up his hand in the wilderness to destroy them.* He made, as if he would do it, and let fall his hand again, as if he could not find in his heart to be so severe. God with-holds his judgments till he is weary of holding in, as the expression is, Jer. vi. 11. till he can forbear no longer; Jer. xliv. 22. *So that the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed.*

4. God is easily prevailed upon not to punish. When he seemed resolved upon it to destroy the murmuring Israelites, yet how often, at the intercession of Moses, did he turn away his wrath? That he will accept of very low terms to spare a very wicked people, appears by the instance of Sodom, where, if there had been *but ten righteous persons*, he would not have destroyed them

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for the *ten's sake.* Yea, when his truth seemed to have been pawned, at least in the apprehension of his Prophet, yet even then repentance took him off, as in the case of Nineveh. Nay, how glad is he to be thus prevented! with what joy does he tell the Prophet the news of Ahab's humiliation! *Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself? Because he humbleth himself, I will not bring the evil in his days.*

5. When he punisheth, he does it very seldom rigorously, and to extremity, not so much as we deserve; Psal. ciii. 10. *He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities,* nor so much as he can. He doth not let loose the fierceness of his anger, nor pour forth all his wrath. Psal. lxxviii. 38. *Being full of compassion, he forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not; yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.*

6. After he hath begun to punish, and is engaged in the work, he is not hard to be taken off.

There is a famous instance of this, 2 Sam. xxiv. when God had sent three days pestilence upon Israel, for David's sin in numbering the people, and, at the end of the third day, the angel of the Lord had stretched forth his hand over Jerusalem, to destroy it; upon the prayer of David, it is said, that the *Lord repented of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, it is enough; stay now thine hand.* Nay, so ready is God to be taken off from this work, that he sets a high value upon those who stand in the gap to turn away his wrath; Numb. xxv. 11, 12, 13. *Phinehas the son of Eleazer, the son of Aaron the Priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, (while he was zealous for my sake among them) that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, behold I give unto him my covenant of peace. And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood: because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.* That which God values in this action of Phinehas, next to his zeal for him, is, that *he turned away his wrath, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.*

V. And

V. And *lastly*, The patience of God will yet appear with farther advantage, if we consider some eminent and remarkable instances of it; which are so much the more considerable, because they are instances not only of God's patience extended to a long time, but to a great many persons; *The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah* upon the whole world, as is probably conjectured, for the space of an hundred and twenty years. God bore with the people of Israel in the wilderness, after they had tempted him ten times, for the space of forty years; Acts xiii. 18. *And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.* And this instance of God's patience will be the more remarkable, if we compare it with the great impatience of that people; if they did but want flesh or water, they were out of patience with God: when Moses was in the mount with God but forty days, they presently fall to make new Gods; they had not the patience of forty days, and yet God bore their manners forty years. God had spared Nineveh for some ages; and when his patience was even expired, and he seems to have past a final sentence upon it, yet he grants a reprieve for forty days, that they might sue out their pardon in that time: and they did so; *they turned from their evil ways, and God turned from the evil he said he would do them, and he did it not.*

But the most remarkable instance of God's long-suffering is to the Jews, if we consider it with all the circumstances of it; after they had rejected the Son of God, notwithstanding the purity of his doctrine, and the power of his miracles; after they had unjustly condemned, and cruelly *murdered the Lord of life*, yet the patience of God respited the ruin of that people forty years.

Besides all these, there are many instances of God's patience to particular persons: but it were endless to enumerate these; every one of us may be an instance to ourselves of God's long-suffering.

I shall only add, as a farther advantage to set off the patience of God to sinners, that his forbearance is so great, that he hath been complained of for it by his own servants. Job, who was so patient a man himself, thought much at it; Job xxi. 7, 8. *Wherefore do the wicked*

wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Jonah challengeth God for it, chap. iv. 2. *Was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish; for I know that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger,* &c. Jonah had observed God to be so prone to this, that he was loth to be sent upon his message, lest God should discredit his Prophet, in not being so good, shall I say, so severe as his word.

I have done with the first thing I proposed to speak to, *viz.* the great patience and long-suffering of God to mankind.

SERMON CXLIX

The patience of God.

2 PET. iii. 9.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, (as some men count slackness) but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The second sermon on this text.

I Have made entrance into these words; in the handling of which, I proposed to do these three things:

First, To consider the patience and long-suffering of God, as it is an attribute and perfection of the divine nature; *God is long-suffering to us-ward.*

Secondly, To shew, that the patience of God, and the delay of his judgment, is no just ground why sinners should hope for impunity; *God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness.*

Thirdly, To consider the true reason of God's patience and long suffering towards mankind; *He is long-suffer-*

suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. I have already spoken to the

First of these, namely, the patience and long-suffering of God, as it is an attribute and perfection of the divine nature. I proceed now to the

Second thing I proposed, namely, To shew that the patience of God, and the delay of judgment, is no just ground why sinners should hope for impunity; *God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness:* that is, as the scoffers, here mentioned by the Apostle, did ignorantly and maliciously reason, that because our Lord delayed his coming to judgment so long, therefore he would never come.

There was, indeed, some pretence for this objection, because the Christians did generally apprehend that the day of judgment was very near, and that it would immediately follow the destruction of Jerusalem; and it seems, the disciples themselves were of that persuasion before our Saviour's Death; when our Saviour, discoursing to them of the destruction of the temple, they put these two questions to him, Matt. xxiv. 3. *And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* When shall these things be? that is, the things he had been speaking of immediately before, *viz.* the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dissolution of the temple; that is plainly the meaning of the first question; to which they subjoined another, And what shall be the sign of thy coming? that is, to judgment; and of the end of the world? which, in all probability, was added to the former, because they supposed that the one was presently to follow the other; and therefore the same answer would serve them both: and it appears by our Saviour's answer, that he was not concerned to rectify them in this mistake, which might be of good use to them, both to make them more zealous to propagate the gospel, since there was like to be so little time for it, and likewise to wean their affections from this world, which they thought to be so near an end.

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One thing, indeed, our Saviour says, which, had they ot been prepossessed with another opinion, does sufficiently intimate, that there might be a considerable pace of time betwixt the destruction of Jerusalem and he day of judgment; and this we find only in St. Luke, hap. xxi. 4. where, speaking of the miseries and calamities that should come upon the Jews, he says, *They hall fall by the edge of the sword, and be carried into captivity into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden lown of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be ulfilled.* So that here were a great many events foreold, betwixt the destruction of Jerusalem and the end f the world, the accomplishment whereof might take p a great deal of time, as appears by the event of hings; Jerusalem being at this day still trodden down by he Gentiles, and the Jews still continuing dispersed o-er the world: but the disciples, it seems, did not much nind this, being carried away with a prejudicate conceit, that the end of the world would happen before the nd of that age; in which they were much confirmed by what our Saviour, after his resurrection, said of St. John, pon occasion of Peter's question concerning him, John xxi. 21, 22. *Lord, what shall this man do? Jesus saith nto him, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that o thee?* upon which words of our Svaiour concerning him, St. John himself adds, ver. 23. *Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die;* that is, that he should live till the coming of our Lord, and then be taken up with him into heaven: from all which, they probably, as they thought, concluded, that the day of judgment would happen before the end of that age, whilst St. John was alive: but St. John, who writ last of all the Evangelists, as Eusebius tells us, and lived till after the destruction of Jerusalem, as he acquaints us with this mistake, which was current among the Christians, so he takes care to rectify it, telling us, that Jesus said not, he should not die; but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? he tells us, that our Saviour did not affirm that he should not die; but, to repress St. Peter's curiosity, he says, *If it were my pleasure that he should not die at all, but live till I come to judgment, what is that to thee?* And St. Peter

like-

likewise (or whoever was the author of this second epistle, or at least of this third chapter, which seems to be a new epistle by itself) takes notice of this mistake, about the nearness of the day of judgment, as that which gave occasion to those scoffers to deride the expectation of a future judgment among the Christians, because they had been already deceived about the time of it; and this the scoffers twitted them with, in that question, *Where is the promise of his coming?* Therefore the learned Grotius conjectures very probably, that this last epistle, contained in the third chapter, was written after the destruction of Jerusalem, which was the time fixed for Christ's coming to judgment; and therefore there could be no ground for this scoff till after that time. St. Peter, indeed, did not live so long; and therefore Grotius thinks that this epistle was writ by Simeon, or Simon, who was successor of St. James in the bishoprick of Jerusalem, and lived to the time of Trajan.

I have been the longer in giving an account of this, that we might understand where the ground and force of this scoff lay, namely, in this, that because the Christians had generally been very confident that the coming of Christ to judgment would be presently after the destruction of Jerusalem, and were now found to be deceived in that; therefore there was no regard to be had at all to their expectation of a future judgment, because they might be deceived in that, as well as in the other.

But herein they argued very falsly; because our Saviour had positively and peremptorily foretold his coming to judgment, but had never fixed and determined the time of it: nay, so far was he from that, that he had plainly told his disciples that the precise time of the day of judgment God had reserved as a secret to himself, which he had not imparted to any, no, not to the angels in heaven, nor to the Son himself; Mark xiii. 32, 33. *But of that day and hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father: Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.* So that if they presumed to make any conjectures about the time when the day of judgment would be, they did it without any warrant from our

ur Lord: it was great presumption in them to determine the time of it, when our Saviour had so expressly told them that the Father had reserved this as a secret, which he had never communicated to any; and therefore, if they were mistaken about it, it was no wonder: but their mistake in this, was no prejudice to the truth of our Saviour's clear prediction of a future judgment, without any determination of the time of it, for that might be at some thousands of years distance, and yet be certain for all that: and the delay of it, was no sign of the uncertainty of our Saviour's prediction concerning it, but only of God's great patience and long-suffering to sinners, in expectation of their repentance; *God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward.* And this brings me to the

Third and *last* Particular in the text, namely, The true reason of God's patience and long-suffering to mankind; *He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* And for this St. Peter cites St. Paul, ver. 15th of this chapter; *And account that the long suffering of the Lord is salvation;* that is, that the great end and design of God's goodness and long-suffering to sinners, is, that they may repent, and be saved; *Account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you.* Now, the words are not expressly found in St. Paul's writings: but the sense and effect of them is, *viz.* in Rom. ii. 4. *Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?* God hath a very gracious and merciful design in his patience to sinners: he is good, that he may make us so, and that his goodness may lead us to repentance. He defers punishment on purpose, that he may give men time to bethink themselves, and to return to a better mind: he winks at the sins of men, that they may repent, says the son of Sirach. The patience of God aims at the cure and recovery of those who are not desperately and resolutely wicked.

This is the primary end and intention of God's patience to ſinners: and if he fail of this end, through our hardneſs and impenitency, he hath other ends, which he will infallibly attain: he will hereby glorify the riches of his mercy, and vindicate the righteouſneſs of his juſtice; the damned in hell ſhall acknowledge, that the patience of God was great mercy and goodneſs to them, though they abuſed it; for God does not loſe the glory of his patience, tho' we loſe the benefit of it, and he will make it ſubſervient to his juſtice, one way or other. Thoſe great offenders whom he ſpares, after there are no hopes of their amendment, he many times makes uſe of, as inſtruments for the puniſhing of others, as rods of his wrath, for the diſcipline of the world; and he often reſerves thoſe who are incorrigibly bad, for a more remarkable ruin: but, however, they are reſerved to the judgment of the great day; and if, after God hath exerciſed much patience towards ſinners in this world, he inflicts puniſhment on them in the next, it muſt be acknowledged to be moſt juſt: for what can he do leſs than to condemn thoſe who would not be ſaved, and to make them miſerable who ſo obſtinately refuſed to be happy?

Before I come to apply this diſcourſe concerning the patience and long-ſuffering of God to ſinners, I muſt remove an objection or two:

I. The ſeverity of God to ſome ſinners in this life, and to all impenitent ſinners in the next, ſeems to contradict what hath been ſaid concerning God's patience and long-ſuffering.

As for the ſeverity of God towards impenitent ſinners in the next life, this does not at all contradict the patience of God; becauſe the very nature of patience, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, does ſuppoſe a determinate time, and that they will not laſt always: this life is the day of God's patience, and in the next world his juſtice and ſeverity will take place: and therefore the puniſhment of ſinners in another world, after God hath tried them in this, and expected their repentance, is no ways contrary to his patience and goodneſs, and very agreeable to his wiſdom and juſtice; for it is no part of goodneſs, to ſee itſelf perpetually abuſed; it is not pa-

atience, but ſtupidity and inſenſibleneſs, to endure to e always trampled upon, and to bear to have his holy nd juſt laws for ever deſpiſed and contemned.

And as for his ſeverity to ſome ſinners in this life; to Lot's wife, to the Iſraelite that gathered ſticks on he ſabbath day, to Nadab and Abihu, to Uzzah, to Ananias and Sapphira, and to Herod Agrippa; in all which inſtances God ſeems to have made quick work, nd to have executed judgment ſpeedily: to theſe I anwer, that this ſeverity of God to ſome few doth rather magnify his patience to the reſt of mankind; he ay be ſevere to ſome few, for example and warning to any, that they may learn to make better uſe of his paence, and not to treſpaſs ſo boldly upon it; and, perhaps, he hath exerciſed much patience already towards hoſe to whom at laſt he is ſo ſevere, as is plain in the aſe of Herod, and it may well be ſuppoſed in moſt of he other inſtances: or elſe the ſin ſo ſuddenly and ſeerely puniſhed, was very heinous and preſumptuous, of contagious and ſpreading nature, and of dangerous xample. Lot's wife ſinned moſt preſumptuouſly againſt n expreſs and an eaſy command, and whilſt God was aking care of her deliverance in a very extraordinary anner. That of Nadab and Abihu, and of the man hat gathered ſticks on the ſabbath-day, were preſentafter the giving of the law, in which caſe great ſeveity is neceſſary: and that of Ananias and Sapphira, the firſt publiſhing of the goſpel, that the majeſty of he divine Spirit, and the authority of the firſt publiſhrs of it, might not be contemned: that of Uzzah, was pon the return of the ark of God from among the Phiſtines, that the people might not loſe their reverence r it, after it had been taken captive. So that theſe eceſſary ſeverities to a few, in compariſon of thoſe may that are warned by them, are rather arguments of od's patience, than objections againſt it.

II. It is objected, that if God do not deſire the ruin ſinners, but their repentance, whence comes it to paſs, that all are not brought to repentance? for who ath reſiſted his will? to this I anſwer,

1. That there is no doubt but God is able to do this: e can, if he pleaſeth, conquer and reclaim the moſt

obſtinate ſpirits; he is able, out of ſtones, to raiſe up children unto Abraham: and ſometimes he exerts his omnipotence herein, as in the converſion of St. Paul, in a kind of violent and irreſiſtible manner; but he hath no where declared that he will do this to all; and we ſee plainly, in experience, that he does not do it.

2. God may very well be ſaid, not to be willing that any one ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance, when he does, on his part, what is ſufficient to that end; and, upon this ground, the ſcripture every where repreſents God as deſiring the repentance of ſinners, and their obedience to his laws: Deut. v. 29. *O that there were ſuch an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them!* So, Jer. xiii. 27. *O Jeruſalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when ſhall it once be?* Iſa. v. 3, 4. we find God there ſolemnly appealing to the people of Iſrael, whether there had been any thing wanting on his part that was fit to be done; *And now, O inhabitants of Jeruſalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard: what could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done to it? wherefore when I looked that it ſhould bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?* God may juſtly look for the fruits of repentance and obedience from thoſe to whom he affords a ſufficiency of means to that end. And if ſo, then,

3. The true reaſon why men do not repent, but periſh, is becauſe they are obſtinate, and will not repent; and this account the ſcripture every where gives of the impenitency of men, and the ruin conſequent upon it: Pſal. lxxxi. 13. *O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Iſrael had walked in my ways! but my people would not hearken to my voice, and Iſrael would none of me.* Ezek. xxxiii. 11. *Why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?* Prov. i. 29, 30, 31. *That they hated knowledge, and did not chuſe the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counſel; they deſpiſed all my reproof. Therefore they ſhall eat of the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices.* The ruin of ſinners doth not proceed from the counſel of God, but from their own choice. And ſo likewiſe our Saviour every where chargeth the ruin

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and destruction of the Jews upon their wilful obstinacy.

The inferences from this discourse, concerning the patience and long-suffering of God towards mankind, shall be these three:

I. To stir us up to a thankful acknowledgment of the great patience of God towards us, notwithstanding our manifold and heinous provocations. We may every one of us take to ourselves those words, Lam. iii. 22. *It is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.* They are renewed every morning. Whenever we sin, (and we provoke God every day) it is of his patience that we are not destroyed: and when we sin again, this is a new and greater instance of God's patience. The mercies of God's patience are no more to be numbered than our sins: we may say with David, *how great is the sum of them?* The goodness of God in sparing us is, in some respect, greater than his goodness in creating us: because he had no provocation not to make us, but we provoke him daily to destroy us.

II. Let us propound the patience of God, for a pattern to ourselves. Plutarch says, "That God sets forth 'himself in the midst of the world for our imitation, 'and propounds to us the example of his patience, to 'teach us not to revenge injuries hastily upon one 'another."

III. Let us comply with the design of God's patience and long-suffering towards us, which is to bring us to repentance. Men are very apt to abuse it to a quite contrary puapose, to the encouraging themselves in their evil ways. So Solomon observes, Eccl. viii. 11. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* But this is very false reasoning; for the patience of God is an enemy to sin, as well as his justice; and the design of it is not to countenance sin, but to convert the sinner: Rom. ii. 4. *Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?* Patience in God should produce repentance in us; and we should look upon it as an opportunity

given us by God to repent, and be saved; 2 Pet. iii. 15. *Account that the long-suffering of God is salvation.* They, that do not improve the patience of God to their own salvation, mistake the true meaning and intent of it. But many are so far from making this use of it, that they presume upon it, and sin with more courage and confidence because of it: but that we may be sensible of the danger of this, I will offer two or three considerations;

1. That nothing is more provoking to God, than the abuse of his patience. God's patience waits for our repentance; and all long attendance, even of inferiors upon their superiors, hath something in it that is grievous: how much more grievous and provoking must it be to the great God, after he hath laid out upon us all the riches of his goodness and long suffering, to have that despised? after his patience hath waited a long time upon us, not only to be thrust away with contempt, but to have that which should be an argument to us to leave our sins, abused into an encouragement to continue in them? God takes an account of all the days of his patience and forbearance; Luke xiii. 7. *Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?*

2. Consider that the patience of God will have an end. Though God suffers long, he will not suffer always; we may provoke God so long, till he can forbear no longer without injury and dishonour to his wisdom, and justice and holiness; and God will not suffer one attribute to wrong the rest: his wisdom will determine the length of his patience; and when his patience is to no purpose, when there is no hopes of our amendment, his wisdom will then put a period to it; then the patience of his mercy will determine. *How often would I have gathered you, and you would not? therefore your house is left unto you desolate.* And the patience of God's judgments will then determine; *Why should they be smitten any more? they will revolt more and more.* Yea, patience itself, after a long and fruitless expectation, will expire. A sinner may continue so long impenitent, till the patience of God, as I may say, grows impatient, and

nd then our ruin will make haſte, and deſtruction will ome upon us in a moment. If men will not come to epentance, the day of the Lord will come as a thief n the night, as it follows in the next verſe after the ext; the judgment of God will ſuddenly ſurprize hoſe who will not be gained by his patience.

3. Conſider, that nothing will more haſten and aggravate our ruin, than the abuſe of God's patience. All his time of God's patience, his wrath is coming towards us; and the more we preſume upon it, the ſooner it will overtake us: Luke xii. 45, 46. the wicked ſervant, who ſaid *his Lord delayed his coming*, and fell to *rioting and drunkenneſs*; our Saviour tells us, that *the Lord of that ſervant will come in a day when he looks not for him.*

And it will aggravate our ruin; the longer puniſhment is a coming, the heavier it will be: thoſe things which are long in preparation are terrible in execution; the weight of God's wrath will make amends for the ſlowneſs of it; and the delay of judgment will be fully recompenſed in the dreadfulneſs of it when it comes.

Let all thoſe conſider this, who go on in their ſin, and are deaf to the voice of God's patience, which calls upon them every moment of their lives. There is a day of vengeance a-coming upon thoſe who trifle away this day of God's patience: nothing will ſooner and more inflame the wrath and diſpleaſure of God againſt us, than his abuſed patience, and the deſpiſed riches of his goodneſs. As oil, though it be ſoft and ſmooth, yet, when it is once inflamed, burns moſt fiercely; ſo the patience of God, when it is abuſed, turns into fury; and his mildeſt attributes, into the greateſt ſeverities.

And if the patience of God do not bring us to repentance, it will but prepare us for a more intolerable ruin: after God hath kept a long indignation in his breaſt, it will, at length, break forth with the greater violence. The patience of of God increaſeth his judgments by an incredible kind of proportion; Lev. xxvi. 18. *And if you will ſtill*, ſays God to the people of Iſrael, *walk contrary to me, and if ye will not be reformed by all theſe things, I will puniſh you yet ſeven times more.*

And,

And, ver. 28. *I will bring seven times more plagues upon you, according to your sins.* At first God's justice accuseth sinners; but, after a long time of patience, his mercy comes in against us, and, instead of staying his hand, adds weight to his blows; Rom. ix. 22. *What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction?* They, upon whom the patience of God hath no good effect, *are vessels of wrath, prepared and fitted for destruction.* If ever God display his wrath, and make his anger known, he will do it in the most severe manner upon those who have despised and abused his patience; for these, in a more peculiar manner, *do treasure up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*

To conclude: let us all take a review of our lives, and consider how long the patience of God hath waited upon us, and borne with us; with some twenty, forty, perhaps sixty years, and longer. Do we not remember how God spared us in such a danger, when we gave ourselves for lost? and how he recovered us in such a sickness, when the physician gave us up for gone? and what use have we made of this patience and long-suffering of God towards us? It is the worst temper in the world, not to be melted by kindness, not to be obliged by benefits, not to be tamed by gentle usage. He that is not wrought upon, neither by the patience of his mercy, nor by the patience of his judgments, his case is desperate, and pa[illegible]medy. *Consider this, all ye that forget God, lest his pa[illegible]nce turn into fury; for God is not slack, as some men count slackness, but long-suffering to sinners, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

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SERMON CL.

The long-suffering of God.

ECCLES. viii. 11.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

The first sermon on this text.

NOthing is more evident, than that *the world lies in wickedness*, and that iniquity every where abounds; and yet nothing is more certain, than that God will not acquit the guilty, and let sin go unpunished. All men, excepting those who have offered notorious violence to the light of their own minds, and *have put the candle of the Lord*, which is in them, *under a bushel*, do believe that there is a God in the world, to whose holy nature and will sin is perfectly contrary, *who loves righteousness, and hates iniquity; that his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings; that there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.* All men, except those whose *consciences are seared, as it were, with an hot iron*, are convinced of the difference of good and evil, and that it is not all one whether men serve God, or serve him not, do well, or live wickedly. Every man, from his inward sense and experience, is satisfied of his own liberty, and that God lays upon men no necessity of sinning, but that whenever we do amiss, it is our own act, and we chuse to do so; and so far is he from giving the least countenance to sin, that he hath given all imaginable discouragement to it, by the most severe and terrible threatenings, such as one would think sufficient to deter men for ever from it, and to drive it out of the world; and to make his threatenings the more awful and effectual, his providence hath not been wanting to

to give remarkable instances of his justice and severity upon notorious offenders, even in this life: and yet for all this, men do, and will sin; nay, they are zealously set and bent upon it.

Now, here is the wonder; what it is that gives sinners such heart, and makes them so resolute and undaunted in so dangerous a course. Solomon gives us this account of it; because the punishments and judgments of God follow the sins of men so slowly, and are long before they overtake the sinner; *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil.*

The scope of the wise man's discourse is this; that, by reason of God's forbearance and long-suffering towards sinners in this life, it is not so easy to discern the difference betwen them and other men; this life is the day of God's patience, but the next will be a day of retribution and recompence. Now, because God doth defer and moderate the punishment of sinners in this world, and reserve the weight of his judgments to the next; because, through the long-suffering of God, many great sinners live and die without any remarkable testimony of God's wrath and displeasure against them; *therefore the hearts of the children of men are fully set in them to do evil.*

If we render the text word for word from the original, it runs thus; *Because nothing is done as a recompence to an evil work, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are full in them to do evil;* that is, because men are not opposed and contradicted in their evil ways, because divine justice doth not presently check and controul sinners, because sentence is not immediately past upon them, and judgment executed, *therefore the heart of the sons of men is full in them to do evil;* that is, therefore men grow bold and presumptuous in sin: for the Hebrew word which we render, *is fully set in them*, we find, Esther vii. 5. where Ahasuerus says, concerning Haman, *Who is he? and where is he that durst presume in his heart to do so? Whose heart was full to do so? Fervet in iis cor filiorum hominum;* so some render it, "The hearts of men boil with wickedness, are so full of

of it, that it works over. Men are resolute in an evil course, *their hearts are strengthened and hardened in them to do evil*, so others translate the words. The translation of the LXX is very emphatical, ἐπληροφορήθη καρδία, *the heart of the sons of men is fully persuaded and assured to do evil.* All these translations agree in the main scope and sense, *viz.* that sinners are very apt to presume upon the long-suffering of God, and to abuse it, to the hardening and encouraging of themselves in their evil ways. In the handling of this, I shall,

1. Briefly shew that it is so.

2. Whence this comes to pass, and upon what pretences and colours of reason, men encourage themselves in sin, from the patience of God.

3. I shall endeavour to answer an objection about this matter.

I. That men are very apt to abuse the long-suffering of God, to the encouraging and hardening of themselves in an evil course, the experience of the world, in all ages, does give abundant testimony. Thus it was with the old world, *when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while he was preparing an ark, for the space of an hundred and twenty years*, 1 Pet. iii. 20. For the wickedness of man, which was great upon the earth, a general deluge was threatened; but God was patient, and delayed his judgment a great while: hereupon they grew secure in their impenitency, and went on in their course, as if they had no apprehension of danger, no fear of the judgment threatened. So our Saviour tells us, Matth. xxiv. 38, 39. *As in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away.* And so it was with Sodom, Luke xvii. 28. And *like also as it was in the days of Lot, they eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built.* And so, our Saviour tells us, it will be in the end of the world; *Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.* So likewise the Apostle St. Paul, Rom. ii. 4, 5. *Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hard-*

ness

ness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath a gainst the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteou judgment of God. The goodness and long-suffering o God, which ought, in all reason, to lead men to re pentance, is to many an occasion of greater hardne and impenitency. So also St. Peter foretells, 2 Pet. iii 3. *That in the last days there should come scoffers, wh should walk after their own hearts lusts, saying, where i the promise of his coming?* And we see, in daily expe rience, that the greatest part of sinners grow more ob stinate and confirmed in their wicked ways, upon ac count of God's patience, and because he delays the pu nishment due to them for their sins. Let us consider in the

II. Place, Whence this comes to pass, and upon wha pretence and colour of reason men encourage themselve in sin, from the long suffering of God. And there is no doubt but this proceeds from our ignorance and in considerateness, and from *an evil heart of unbelief*, from the temptation and suggestion of the devil, one of whose great arts it is, to make men question the threat enings of God, and to insinuate, as he did to our first parents, either that he hath not denounced such threat enings, or that he will not execute them so severely. All these causes do concur to the producing this mon strous effect: but that which I design to enquire into, is, from what pretence of reason, grounded upon the long suffering of God, sinners argue themselves into this con fidence and presumption. For when the wise man saith, that *because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil;* he does not intend to insinuate, that God's long-suffering fills the hearts of men with wicked designs and resolutions, and does, by a proper and direct efficacy, harden sinners in their course; but, that wicked men, upon some account or other, do take occasion, from the long-suffering of God to harden themselves in sin; they draw false conclusions from it to impose upon themselves, as if it were really a ground of encourage ment; they think they see something in the forbear ance of God, and his delay of punishment, which makes them

hem hope for impunity in an evil course, notwithstanding the threatenings of God.

And therefore I shall endeavour to shew, what those alse conclusions are, which wicked men draw from the elay of punishment, and to discover the sophistry and allacy of them; and I shall rank them under two eads; those which are more gross and atheistical; and ho'e which are not so gross, but yet more common and requent.

First, Those conclusions which are more gross and theistical, which bad men draw, to the hardening and ncouraging of themselves in sin, from the delay of punishment, (which we, who believe a God, call the patience or long-suffering of God) are these three; either hat there is no God; or if there be, that there is no rovidence; or that there is no difference between good nd evil.

I shall speak more briefly of these, because I hope here are but few in the world of such irregular and betted understandings, as to make such inferences as hese, from the delay of punishment.

1. From hence some would fain conclude, that there no God. That some are so absurd as to reason in this anner, the scripture tells us, Psal. xiv. 1. *The fool ath said in his heart, there is no God: they are corrupt, nd have done abominable works.* Now, the argument hat these men frame to themselves, is this; God doth ot take a speedy course with sinners, and revenge himlf immediately upon the workers of iniquity, therefore here is no God; for, if there were, he would shew mself, and not bear the affronts of sinners, when it is easy for him to vindicate himself by a swift and speedy vengeance. Thus the Poet represents the Atheist arguing; *Nullos esse deos; inane cœlum, affirmat Selius, obatque, quod se factum, dum negat hoc, videt beatum.* Selius affirms, There are no gods, and that heaven is an empty place, and proves it, because, whilst he denies God, he sees himself in a very happy and prosperous condition."

And here it is worthy our notice, at what a contradictious rate these men reason; first, they would have God, lest he would be just, and punish them as

they deserved; and then, in another mood, the would have him to be nothing but justice and severity lest there should be a God; as if no other notion could be framed of the divine nature, but of a rash fury, an impetuous revenge, and an impotent passion, which when it is offended and provoked, cannot contain itself, and forbear punishment for a moment. Justice not such a perfection as doth necessarily exclude wisdom, and goodness, and patience; it doth in nowise contradict the perfection of the divine nature, to bear with sinners, in expectation of their repentance and amendment; or if God foresees their final impenitency to respite their punishment to the most fit and convenient season. God may suffer long, and yet be resolved if sinners persist in the abuse of his goodness and patience, to execute vengeance upon them in due time. It is a pitiful ground of Atheism, that because God is so much better than wicked men deserve, they will not allow him to be at all.

2. Others infer from the delay of punishment, that there is no providence that administers the affairs of the world, and regards the good and bad actions of men: for, though the being of God be acknowledged, yet if he do not regard what is done here below, nor concern himself in human affairs, sinners are as safe and free to do what they please, as if there were no God; and, upon this ground, the scripture tells us, many encourage themselves in their wickedness; Psal. lxiv. 5. *They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; for they say, who shall see them?* And more expressly, Psal. xciv. 4, 5, 6, 7. *How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? they break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.* And if this were so, well might they encourage themselves. If it were true which Epicurus saith, "That God takes no knowledge of the actions of "men; that he is far removed from us, and contented "with himself, and not at all concerned in what we "do;" If this were true, the inference which Lucretius

retius makes, were very just; *Quare religio pedibus subjecta vicissim obteritur;* "Men might trample reli-
" gion under their feet, and live without any regard
" to the laws of it."

But let us see how they infer this from the long-suffering of God, that he neglects the affairs of the world, and hath no consideration of the actions of men, because they see the ungodly to prosper in the world equally with others that are strictly devout and virtuous, yea, many times, to be in a more prosperous and flourishing condition; *they are not in trouble like other men, neither are they plagued like other men.* So that if there be a God, it seems, say they, that he connives at the crimes of men, and *looks upon them that deal treacherously, and holds his peace, whilst the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than himself,* as the Prophet expresseth it, Hab. i. 13.

For answer to this, I shall only give this reasonable and credible account of the long suffering of God, and the impunity of wicked men in this life, which not only the scripture gives us, but the Heathen were able to give from the light of nature, and is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, namely, that this life is a state of probation and trial, wherein God *suffers men to walk in their own ways,* without any visible check and restraint, and does not usually inflict present and remarkable punishments upon them for their evil deeds; because this being a state of trial of the dispositions and manners of men, is rather the proper season of patience, than of punishments and rewards; and therefore it is very reasonable to suppose that God reserves sinners for a solemn and publick trial at the great assizes of the world, when he will openly vindicate the honour of his justice upon the despisers of his patience and long-suffering, when he will make *his judgment to break forth as the light, and his righteousness as the noon-day.* In the mean time, the providence of God, when he sees it fit, gives some remarkable instances of his justice upon great and notorious offenders in this life, as a pledge and earnest of a future judgment; and these, sometimes more general, as in the destruction of the old world by an universal deluge, when *he saw the*

wickedneſs of men to be great upon the earth: and ſuch was that terrible vengeance which was poured down upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them which, as St. Jude tells us, *are ſet forth for an example, ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire,* that is, a perpetual deſtruction by fire.

Another groſs and atheiſtical inference, which men are apt to make from the delay of puniſhment is, that there is no ſuch difference of good and evil as is pretended; becauſe they do not ſee the good and bad actions of men differenced in their rewards, becauſe divine juſtice doth not preſently manifeſt itſelf; and *every tranſgreſſion and diſobedience* doth not immediately *receive a juſt recompence of reward,* therefore they cannot believe that the difference between good and evil is ſo great and evident.

For anſwer to this: not to inſiſt upon the difference which the providence of God ſometimes makes between them in this life, I appeal to the conſciences of men whether they do not ſecretly and inwardly acknowledge a clear difference between good and evil. Are not the worſt of men apt to conceive better hopes of ſucceſs, when they are about a juſt and honeſt undertaking, than when they are engaged in a wicked deſign? Do not bad men feel a ſecret ſhame and horror, when no eye ſees them, and the wickedneſs they are about to commit doth not fall under the cognizance and cenſure of any human court or tribunal? have they not many checks and rebukes in their own ſpirits, much diſturbance and confuſion of mind, when they are enterprizing a wicked thing? And does not this plainly argue, that they are guilty to themſelves, that they are about ſomething which they ought not to do?

It is very true, that moſt men are more ſenſible of the evil of an action, when they feel the ill effects and conſequences of it, and ſuffer the puniſhment that is due to it: but yet the ſenſe of good and evil is ſo deeply impreſt upon human nature, that I think no man, remaining a man, can quite deface and blot out the difference of good and evil. So that if men will but attend to the natural dictates and ſuggeſtions of their own minds,

inds, they cannot possibly infer, from the delay of pu-
shment, that there is no difference of good and evil.
But, because those who are thus are but few, in com-
rison, there being not many in the world arrived to
at degree of blindness, and height of impiety, as to
believe a God, and a providence; and I think none
ve attained to that perfect conquest of conscience,
to have lost all sense of good and evil; therefore I
all rather insist,

Secondly, Upon those kind of reasonings which are
ore ordinary and common among bad men, and
hereby they cheat themselves into everlasting perdi-
on; and they are such as these:

1. *Because sentence against an evil work is not speed-
ly executed*, therefore sin is not so great an evil.

2. Therefore God is not so highly offended and pro-
oked by it. Or,

3. God is not so severe in his own nature, as he is
ommonly represented.

4. Therefore the punishment of sin is not so certain:
r, however,

5. It is at a distance, and may be prevented time e-
ough, by a future repentance in our old age, or at the
our of death. By some such false reasonings as these,
hich men think may probably be collected from the
atience and long-suffering of God, they harden and
ncourage themselves in an evil course.

1. Because the punishment of sin is deferred, there-
ore they conclude it is not so great an evil; they do
ot feel the ill effects of it at present; all things go well
nd prosperously with them, no less than with those who
re so strict and conscientious; and therefore they hope
here is no such great evil in sin, as melancholy people
re apt to fancy to themselves. For answer to this,

1. Consider seriously what sin is, and then thou wilt
ee reason enough to call it a great evil. To sin against
God, is to contemn the greatest authority in the world,
o contradict the greatest holiness and purity, to abuse
he greatest goodness, and to provoke almighty justice
o take vengeance upon thee, and to make thee as misе-
able as thou art capable of being. To sin against God,
s to be disobedient to thy Sovereign, and unthankful to

thy beſt Benefactor, and to act contrary to the great eſt obligations, againſt thy beſt reaſon, and trueſt int reſt; to diſoblige thy kindeſt friend, and to gratify th worſt and bittereſt enemy; it is to diſorder thyſelf, create perpetual diſquiet to thy own mind, and to the greateſt miſchief poſſible to thyſelf; to deprive th ſelf of the greateſt happineſs, and to draw down upo thyſelf extreme and eternal miſery. And what do w call a great evil, if this be not, which contains in it a the kinds, and all the aggravations of evil that can b and hath all the circumſtances of ugline's and deformit in it that can be imagined?

2. Whatever ſin be in itſelf, yet from hence we ca in nowiſe conclude that it is not a great evil, becau the puniſhment of it is deferred for a while: from hen indeed it follows, that God is very good in deferring th puniſhment which is due to thee for thy ſins, but by n means that ſin is not very evil. The reprieve of a tra tor does indeed argue the goodneſs and clemency of th Prince, but doth not at all abate of the heinouſne's c the crime for which he is ſentenced. The great evil c ſin is evident, becauſe the holy and juſt God hath for bidden it, and declared his hatred and deteſtation of it and threatened it with moſt ſevere and direful puniſh ment: but that God reſpites the puniſhment which i due to ſin, and does not immediately take vengeance up on ſinners, but affords them a ſpace, and means, an opportunity of repentance; this doth not at all leſſe the evil of ſin, but is rather an aggravation of it, tha we ſhould offend and provoke that God who is ſo pa tient and long-ſuffering towards us, ſo very loth to bring thoſe evils upon us, which we are ſo raſh and forward to pull down upon ourſelves.

II. If God doth not immediately puniſh ſin upon the commiſſion of it, and inſtantly let fly at the ſinner, thi they would conſtrue to be a ſign that he is not ſo high ly offended and provoked by it; if he were, he would manifeſt his diſpleaſure againſt it, by the ſudden and violent effuſions of his wrath. For anſwer to this, I deſire theſe two things may be conſidered.

1. That God himſelf, in his word, every where plain ly declares to us his great diſpleaſure againſt ſin:

Pſal.

Psal. v. 4, 5. *Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all the workers of iniquity. Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness.* The words are a μείωσις, and less is spoken than is meant and intended, *viz.* that God is so far from taking pleasure in the sins of men, that he is highly displeased at them, and bears an implacable hatred against them.

And do not the terrible threatnings of God against sin declare him to be highly offended at it? When he says, that *he will come in flaming fire to render vengeance to all them that know not the gospel of his Son;* and that they *shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* Can we think that all the threatenings of God's word, and all those direful curses which are written in his book, shall return empty, without doing any execution? thou that now flatterest thyself in vain and groundless hopes, that none of these evils shall come upon thee, when thou comest to stand before the great Judge of the world, and to behold the killing frowns of his countenance, and to hear those bitter words of eternal displeasure from the mouth of God himself, *Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;* thou wilt then believe that God is heartily angry and offended with thee for thy sins. We shall find in that day, that the threatenings of God's word, which we now hear so securely, and without terror, had a full signification; or rather, that no words could convey to us the terror of them. What the scripture says of the happiness and glory of the next life, is true also of the misery and punishments of the other world, that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, those terrible things which God hath reserved for the workers of iniquity.*

But, above all, the direful sufferings of the Son of God, when sin was but imputed to him, are a demonstration of God's implacable hatred of sin; for that rather than sin should go unpunished, God was pleased to subject his own Son to the sufferings due to it: this plainly

ly shews, that he hated sin, as much as he loved his own Son. But,

2. God may conceive a very great displeasure against sin, and be highly incensed and provoked by it, and yet suspend the effects of his displeasure, and defer the punishment of it for a great while: And to imagine otherwise, argues a gross mistake of the nature of God, arising from our not considering the attributes and perfections of God in conjunction and consistency with one another, when we consider one attribute of God singly, and separate it from the rest, and frame such wide and large apprehensions of it, as to exclude his other perfections, we have a false notion of God; and the reason of this mistake is, because, among men, an eminent degree of any one excellency doth commonly shut out others; because, in our narrow and finite nature, many perfections cannot stand together; but it is quite otherwise in the divine nature. In infinite perfection, all perfections do meet and consist together; one perfection doth not hinder and exclude another: and therefore, in our conceptions of God, we are to take great heed that we do not raise any one attribute or perfection of God upon the ruin of the rest.

So that it is a false imagination of God, when we so attribute justice or anger to him, as to exclude his patience and long-suffering: for God is not impotent in his anger, as we are; every thing that provokes him, doth not presently put him out of patience, so that he cannot contain his wrath, and forbear immediately to revenge himself upon sinners. In this sense, God says of himself, Isa. xxvii. 4. *Fury is not in me.* There is nothing of a rash and ungoverned passion in the wise and just God. Every sin, indeed, kindles his anger, and provokes his displeasure against us, and, by our repeated and continued offences, we still add fuel to his wrath; but it doth not of necessity instantly break forth like *a consuming fire, and a devouring flame.* The holy and righteous nature of God makes him necessarily offended and displeased with the sins of men; but, as to the manifestation of his wrath, and the effects of his anger, his wisdom and goodness do regulate and determine

ine the proper time and circumſtances of puniſhment.

III. From the patience of God, and the delay of puniſhment, men are apt to conclude, that God is not ſevere in his nature as he is commonly repreſented. It is true, he hath declared his diſpleaſure againſt ſin, and threatned it with dreadful puniſhments; which he may do, in great wiſdom, to keep the world in awe and order: but great things are likewiſe ſpoken of his mercy and of the wonderful delight he takes in the exerciſe of his mercy; ſo that notwithſtanding all the threatenings which are denounced againſt ſin, it is to be hoped, that when ſentence comes to be paſt, and judgment to be executed, God *will remember mercy in the midſt of judgment*, and that *mercy will triumph over judgment*; and that as now his patience ſtays his hand, and turns away his wrath, ſo, at the laſt, the milder attributes of his goodneſs and mercy will interpoſe and moderate the rigour and ſeverity of his juſtice, and of this, his great patience and long-ſuffering towards ſinners for the preſent ſeems to be ſome kind of pledge and earneſt; he that is ſo *ſlow to anger*, and ſo loth to execute puniſhment, may probably be prevailed upon, by his own pity and goodneſs, to remit it at the laſt: and this is the more credible, becauſe it is granted on all hands, that no perſon is obliged to execute his threatenings, as he is to make good his promiſes: he that promiſeth paſſeth a right to another; but he that threateneth, keeps the right and power of doing what he pleaſeth in his own hands.

I ſhall ſpeak a little more fully to this, becauſe it is almoſt incredible how much men bear up themſelves upon vain and groundleſs hopes of the boundleſs mercy of God, and *bleſs themſelves in their hearts, ſaying, they ſhall have peace, though they walk in the imagination of their hearts, to add drunkenneſs to thirſt*; that is, though they ſtill perſiſt in their vices, and add one degree of ſin to another.

Now for anſwer to this,

1. Let it be granted, that a bare threatening does not neceſſarily infer the certainty of the event; and that the thing threatened ſhall infallibly come to paſs: no per-

ſon

ſon is obliged to perform his threatenings, as he i
promiſes; the threatenings of God declare what ſin
ſerves, and what the ſinner may juſtly expect, if he c
tinue impenitent and incorrigible. But then we ar
take notice, that repentance is the only condition t
is implied in the threatenings of God, and will effe
ally hinder the execution of them: Jer. xviii. 7, 8,
10. *At what inſtant I ſpeak,* ſays God, *concerning a n
on, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull do
and to deſtroy it; if that nation againſt whom I have p
nounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil t
I thought to do unto them. And at what inſtant I ſh
ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom,
build and to plant it; if it do evil in my ſight, and obey
my voice, then will I repent of the good wherewith I ſa
I would benefit them.* Now if, when God hath prom
ed to do good to a people, ſin will hinder the bleſſi
promiſed, and bring down judgments upon the
much more when it is particularly threatened.

But, as to the caſe of final impenitency and unb
lief, God, that he might ſtrengthen his threatenings, ha
added a ſign of immutability to them, having confirm
ed them with an oath; *I have ſworn,* ſaith the Lor
that they ſhall not enter into my reſt: which, tho' it wa
ſpoken to the unbelieving Jews, the Apoſtle to the He
brews applies it to a final unbelief and impenitency un
der the goſpel, of which the infidelity of the Iſraelite
was a type and figure. Now, though God may remi
of his threatenings: yet his oath is a plain declaratio
that he will not; becauſe it ſignifies the firm and im
mutable determination of his will, and thereby put
an end to all doubts and controverſies concerning the
fulfilling of his threatenings.

2. It is certainly much the wiſeſt and ſafeſt way, to
believe the threatenings of God, in the ſtrictneſs and
rigour of them, unleſs there be ſome tacit condition e
vidently implied in them; becauſe, if we do not believe
them, and the thing prove otherwiſe, the conſequence
of our miſtake is fatal and dreadful. It is true, indeed,
that God, by his threatenings, did intend to keep ſin
ners in awe, and to deter them from ſin: but if he had
any where revealed, that he would not be rigorous in
the

e execution of these threatenings, such a revelation ould quite take off the edge and terror of them, and ntradict the end and design of them; for threatenings gnify very little, but upon this supposition, that in all robability they will be executed: and if this be true, is the greatest madness and folly in the world to run e hazard of it.

3. As for those large declarations which the scripture akes of the boundless mercy of God to sinners, we are limit them, as the scripture hath done, to the time nd season of mercy, which is this life, and while we re in the way. This is the day of mercy and salvaion; and when this life is ended, the opportunities of race and mercy are past, and the day of recompence nd vengeance will begin. Now God tries us, and offers mercy to us; but if we obstinately refuse it, judgment will take hold of us.

And then we must limit the mercy of God to the onditions upon which he offers it, which are, repenance for sins past, and sincere obedience for the future; ut if men continue obstinate and impenitent, and encourage themselves in sin, from the mercy and patience of God; this is not a case that admits of mercy, but, on the contrary, his justice will triumph in the ruin nd destruction of those who, instead of embracing the offers of his mercy, do despise and abuse them; *He will laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear comes; when their fear comes as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon them, then they may call upon him, but he will not answer; they may seek him early, but they shall not find him.* If we despise the riches of God's goodness, and long-suffering, and forbearance, he knows how to handle us, and will do it to purpose; with the froward, he will shew himself froward, and will be in a more especial manner severe towards those who take encouragement from his mercy to disbelieve and despise his threatenings. And this God hath as plainly told us, as words can express any thing, Deut. xxix. 19, 20. *And if it come to pass that when he heareth the words of this curse, he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to*

thirst:

thirst: the Lord will not spare him, but then the an of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that m and all the curses that are written in this book shall upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from unc heaven. Whatever right and power God hath reserv to himself, about the execution of his threatenings, hath plainly declared, that, of all others, those wh encourage themselves in a sinful course, from the hop of God's mercy, notwithstanding his threatenings sha find no favour and mercy at his hand: whatever he ma remit of his threatenings to others, he will certainl not spare those who believe so largely concerning th mercy of God, not with a mind to submit to the term of it, but to presume so much the more upon it.

4. God hath not been wanting to shew some remark able instances of his severity towards sinners in thi world. As he is pleased sometimes to give good me some fore-tastes of heaven, and earnests of their futur happiness; so likewise, by some present stroke, to le sinners feel what they are to expect hereafter; some sparks of hell do now and then fall upon the consciences of sinners. That fear which is sometimes kindled in mens consciences in this life, that horrible anguish, and those unspeakable terrors which some sinners have had experience of in this world, may serve to forewarn us of the wrath which is to come, and to convince us of the reality of those expressions of the torments of hell, by the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched. That miraculous deluge, which swallowed up the old world; that hell which was rained down from heaven in those terrible showers of fire and brimstone, to consume Sodom and Gomorrah; the earth opening her mouth upon Corah and his seditious company, to let them down, as it were, quick into hell: these, and many other remarkable judgments of God in several ages, upon particular persons, and upon cities and nations, may satisfy us, in some measure, of the severity of God against sin, and be, as it were, pledges to assure sinners of the insupportable misery and torments of the next life.

5. The argument is much stronger the other way, that because the punishment of sinners is delayed so long,

ng, therefore it will be much heavier and severer hen it comes; that the wrath of God is growing all is while, and as we fill up the measures of our sins, fills the vials of his wrath: Rom. ii. 5. *And accordg to thy hard and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyf wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation the righteous judgment of God.* God now keeps in displeasure; but all the while we go on in an impetent course, the wrath of God is continually increag, and will at last be manifested by the righteous dgment of God upon sinners. God now exerciseth and playeth his milder attributes, his goodness, and mer, and patience: but these will not always hold out; ere is a dreadful day a-coming, wherein, as the Apoe speaks, God will *shew his wrath, and make his pow known*, after he hath *endured with much long-suffering e vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.* All this long ne of God's patience and forbearance *his wrath is kinled, and he is whetting his glittering sword, and mang sharp his arrows;* and this long preparation doth rtend a much more dreadful execution: so that we ould reason thus from the long-suffering of God; God ars with us, and spares us at present, and keeps in his ger; therefore, if we go on to provoke him, time ill come when he will not spare, but his anger will me forth, and *his jealousy smoke against us.* This is t reasonable to expect, that they who in this world *rsake their own mercies*, the mercy of God in the xt should forsake them.

IV. Another false conclusion, which men draw from e delay of punishment, is that because it is delayed, erefore it is not so certain; the sinner escapes for the esent; and though he have some misgivings and fearl apprehensions of the future, yet he hopes his fears ay be greater than his danger.

It is true, indeed, we are not so certain of the misery wicked men in another world, as if it were prent, and we lay groaning under the weight of it: such certainty as this, would not only leave no place for oubting, but even for that which we properly and ictly call *faith;* for *faith is the evidence of things not en:* but sure we have other faculties besides sense to

judge of things by; we may be sufficiently certain of many things which are neither present nor sensible, of many things past and future, upon good ground and testimony: we are sure that we were born, and yet we have no remembrance of it; we are certain that we shall die, tho' we never had the experience of it. Things may be certain in their causes, as well as in their present existence, if the causes be certain. The truth of God who hath declared these things to us, is an abundant ground of assurance to us, though they be at a great distance: the certainty of things is not shaken by our wavering belief concerning them.

Besides, the very light of nature, and the common reason of mankind, hath always made a contrary inference from the long-suffering of God, and the delay of present punishment. Though men are apt to think that because judgment is deferred, therefore it is not certain; yet the very light of nature hath taught men to reason otherwise; that because God is so patient to sinners in this life, therefore there will a time come when they shall be punished; that because this life is a time of trial and forbearance, therefore there shall be another state after this life, which shall be a season of recompence. And by this argument chiefly it was that the wisest of the Heathen satisfied themselves concerning another state after this life, and answered the trouble some objection against the providence of God, from the unequal administration of things in this world, so visible in the afflictions and sufferings of good men, and the prosperity of the wicked, *viz.* that there would be another state that would adjust all these matters, and set them streight, when good and bad men should receive the full recompence of their deeds. The

V. And last false conclusion which men draw from the long-suffering of God, and the delay of punishment is this; that it is, however, probably, at some distance and therefore they may sin yet a while longer, and all this danger may be prevented time enough, by a future repentance in our old age, or at the hour of death; and they are confirmed very much in this hope, because they see men much worse than themselves, great criminals and malefactors, upon two or three days warning, to

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erform this work of repentance very ſubſtantially, and o die with great comfort and aſſurance of their ſalva-ion. This is the moſt common deluſion of all the reſt, nd hath been, I am afraid, the ruin of more ſouls than ll the other which I have mentioned; they may have *lain their thouſands*, but this *its ten thouſands*.

For anſwer to this, be pleaſed ſeriouſly to lay to eart theſe following conſiderations, moſt of which I hall ſpeak but briefly to; becauſe I have, upon other occaſions, ſpoken largely to them.

1. If there be a future judgment, then it is certain, t how great a diſtance ſoever it may be. That which hall be a thouſand years hence, will certainly be; and t is but very ſmall comfort and encouragement, conſi-dering the vaſt diſproportion between time and eternity, to think, that after twenty or forty years ſhall be paſt and gone, then muſt I enter upon eternal miſery; then will thoſe intolerable torments begin, which ſhall never have an end.

2. But it is not certain that it is at ſuch a diſtance: when we *put from us the evil day*, it is, many times, nearer to us than we are aware; and when we think the judgment of God is at a great diſtance, *the Judge* may be *near, even at the door*. Our times are not in our own hands, but we are perfectly at the diſpoſal of another, who, when he pleaſeth, can put a period to them, and cauſe our breath to ceaſe from our noſtrils, and we ſhall not be: *there is no man hath power over the ſpirit, to re-tain the ſpirit; neither hath he power in the day of death*, ſaith the wiſe man, a little before the text. Thou dream-eſt, perhaps, of many years continuance in this world, and, perhaps in the height of this vain imagination, *the decree is ſealed, and the commandment come forth* to ſummon thee out of this world, and thou art juſt drop-ping into that miſery, which thou fancieſt to be at ſuch a diſtance: whilſt thou art vainly promiſing thyſelf *the eaſe of many years*, God may ſay to thee, *thou fool, this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee*; and then where are all thy hopes?

3. Suppoſing the evil day were at a conſiderable di-ſtance, yet men run an infinite hazard in venturing all the hopes of their ſalvation upon a future repentance;

for what knoweſt thou, O man! but thou mayeſt ſurprized by a ſudden ſtroke, which may give thee warning, leave thee no ſpace of repentance? A viol diſeaſe may ſeize upon thee, which may diſorder t underſtanding, and ſo weaken all thy faculties, as render thee unfit for all reaſonable operations: at t beſt, how unfit are we for the moſt ſerious work our lives, when we are hardly fit to do any thing? O age is a very unſeaſonable time for repentance, when v are full of weakneſs and infirmity, and our minds a crooked and bowed down by vice, as our bodies are b age, and as hard to be recovered to their firſt ſtraigh neſs; much more is it an improper time for this worl when ſickneſs and old age meet together. There are tw things, in which men, in other things wiſe enough, d uſually miſcarry; in putting off the making of thei wills, and their repentance, till it be too late. Men ha need then be of ſound underſtanding, and perfect me mory, when they ſet about matters of ſo great conſe quence in reſpect of their temporal and eternal concern ments; eſpecially when men have the happineſs of [al eternity to take care of and provide for, they had need have their underſtandings about them, and all the advantages of leiſure and conſideration, to make a ſober reflection upon their paſt lives, and make up their accounts with God, and to ſet all things right between him and them; and it is well if, after all, a repentance wilfully deferred ſo long, ſo ſhort and imperfect, ſo confuſed and huddled up, will at laſt be accepted as a tolerable atonement for the crimes and miſcarriages of a long life.

4. Suppoſe thou wert ſure to repent before thou leaveſt the world, and to do this work throughly, which no man can promiſe to himſelf, that deliberately delays it; yet this can be no reaſonable encouragement to go on in an evil courſe, becauſe we do but hereby aggravate our own trouble, and treaſure up much more ſorrow and affliction to ourſelves againſt the day of repentance, and conſequently ſin on, in hopes of being hereafter ſo much the more troubled and grieved for what we have done; as if a man ſhould go on to break the laws, in hopes of a more ſevere and exemplary puniſhment: ſure this can

an be no encouragement or ground of hope to any easonable and considerate man.

Lastly, As to the encouragement which men take from he sudden repentance of great criminals and malefac-ors, and their dying with so much comfort and assu-ance; if this be well considered, there is little comfort o be fetched from such examples. For,

1. Though a sincere repentance in such circumstan-es be possible: yet it is almost impossible for the par-y himself concerned, much more for others, upon any ood ground to judge when it is sincere. God, who nows the hearts of men, and whether, if they had li ed onger, they would, in the future course of their lives, ave justified and made good their repentance and good esolutions, only knows the sincerity of it. But,

2. No certain judgment is to be made from the com-ort and confidence of the party concerned; for the bu-ness is not, what comfort and confidence men have, ut, what ground they have for it: and whereas men re apt piously to suppose that so extraordinary a com-ort and assurance is wrought in them by the Spirit of God, nothing is more uncertain; because we sometimes ee those who give no such testimony of their repen-ance, to die with every whit as much courage, and com-ort, and confident persuasion of their salvation, as those hat do. But this, certainly, is not from the Spirit of God: a natural obstinacy and courage may carry men great way; and false and mistaken principles may fill nen, for the present, with as much comfort and confi-ence as well-grounded hopes. In the church of Rome, great numbers of those who have led very wicked lives, fter a formal confession and absolution, and some good words of encouragement from the Priest, die as ull of peace and comfort, to all appearance, as the est of men.

Indeed, it is very natural to men, who find them-elves in a desperate condition, to be strangely elevated nd raised, upon any hopes given of escaping so great a anger as they apprehend themselves to be in; especi-lly if these hopes be given them by a grave man, of whose piety and judgment they have a venerable opi-ion. When men have the sentence of death in them-

ſelves, as all wicked livers muſt have, they are natu rally apt to be over-joyed at the unexpected news o a pardon.

To ſpeak my mind freely in this matter, I have n great opinion of that extraordinary comfort and confi dence which ſome have, upon a ſudden repentance fo great and flagrant crimes; becauſe I cannot diſcern a ny ſufficient ground for it. I think great humility an dejection of mind, and a doubtful apprehenſion of thei condition, next almoſt to deſpair of it, would much better become them; becauſe their caſe is really ſo very doubtful in itſelf. There is great reaſon for the repentance of ſuch perſons, and it becomes them well; bu I ſee very little reaſon for their great comfort and con fidence, nor does it become their circumſtances and condition. Let them exerciſe as deep a repentance a is poſſible, and bring forth all the fruits meet for it that are poſſible in ſo ſhort a time: let them humble themſelves before God, and pray inceſſantly to him day and night for mercy; make all the reparation they can, for the injuries they have done, by confeſſion, and acknowledgment, and by making ſatisfaction to the parties injured, if it be in their power, by giving alms to the poor, by warning others, and endeavouring to reclaim them to a better mind, and courſe of life; and for the reſt humbly to commit themſelves to the mercy of God in Jeſus Chriſt; let them imitate, as near as they can, the behaviour of the penitent thief, the only example the ſcripture has left us of a late repentance that proved effectual, who gave the greateſt teſtimony that could be of a penitent ſorrow for his ſins, and of his faith in the Saviour of the world, by a generous and courageous owning of him in the midſt of his diſgrace and ſuffering, when even his own diſciples had denied and forſaken him: but we do not find in him any ſigns of extraordinary comfort, much leſs of confidence, but he humbly commended himſelf to the mercy and goodneſs of his Saviour, ſaying, *Lord, remember me when thou comeſt into thy kingdom.*

SER-

SERMON CLI.

The long-suffering of God.

ECCLES. viii. 11.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

The second sermon on this text.

I Have considered how apt men are to abuse the long-suffering of God, to the hardening and encouraging of themselves in sin, and whence this comes to pass; where I considered the several false conclusions which sinners draw from the delay of punishment, as if there were no God, or providence, or difference of good and evil; or else, as is more commonly pretended, that sin is not so great an evil, and that God is not so highly offended at it, or that God is not so severe as he is represented; that the punishment of sin is not so certain, or however, it is at a distance, and may be prevented by a future repentance: All which I have spoken fully to, and endeavoured to shew the fallacy and unreasonableness of them. I shall now proceed to the

III. And last thing I propounded, which was, to answer an objection to which this discourse may seem liable; and that is this. If the long-suffering of God be the occasion of mens hardness and impenitency, then why is God so patient to sinners, when they are so prone to abuse his goodness and patience? And how is it goodness in God to forbear sinners so long, when this forbearance of his is so apt to minister to them an occasion of their further mischief and greater ruin? It should seem, according to this, that it would be much greater mercy to the greatest part of sinners, not to be patient toward them at all; but instantly, upon the first occasion and provocation, to cut them off, and so

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to put a ſtop to their wickedneſs, and to hinder th from making themſelves more miſerable, by increa their guilt, and *treaſuring up wrath to themſelves aga the day of wrath.*

This is the objection; and becauſe it ſeems to be ſome weight, I ſhall endeavour to return a ſatisfac ry anſwer to it, in theſe following particulars. A

1. I ask the ſinner, if he will ſtand to this; art th ſerious, and wouldeſt thou in good earneſt have God deal thus with thee, to take the very firſt advantage deſtroy thee, or turn thee into hell, and to make th miſerable beyond all hopes of recovery? Conſider of again. Doſt thou think it deſirable, that God ſhou deal thus with thee, and let fly his judgments upon th ſo ſoon as ever thou haſt ſinned? If not, why do m trifle, and make an objection againſt the long-ſufferi of God, which they would be very loth ſhould be mad good upon them.

2. It is likewiſe to be conſidered, that the long-ſuffe ing of God toward ſinners is not a total forbearance it is uſually ſo mixed with afflictions and judgments o one kind or other, upon ourſelves or others, as to be ſufficient warning to us, if we would conſider and la it to heart, to ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing come up on us; leſt that judgment which we ſaw inflicted upo others, come home to us. And is not this great goodneſs, to warn us, when he might deſtroy us? to leave room for a retreat, when he might put our caſe paſt remedy?

All this time of God's patience, he threatens ſinners, to awaken them out of their ſecurity; he puniſheth them gently, that we may have no ground to hope for impunity; he makes examples of ſome in a more ſevere and remarkable manner, that others may hear, and fear, and be afraid to commit the like ſins, leſt the like puniſhment overtake them; he whips ſome offenders before our eyes, to ſhew us what ſin deſerves, and what we alſo may juſtly expect, if we do the ſame thing: and will nothing be a warning to us, but our own ſufferings?

Nay, God doth uſually ſend ſome judgment or other upon every ſinner in this life; he lets him feel the rod, that he may know that it is an evil and bitter thing to

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n againſt him. He exerciſeth men with many affli-ions, and croſſes, and diſappointments, which their wn conſciences tell them, are the juſt recompences of eir deeds; and by theſe lighter ſtrokes, he gives us a erciful warning to avoid his heavier blows; when ercy alone will not work upon us and win us, but be-g fed to the full, we grow wanton and fooliſh, he ad-iniſters phyſick to us by affliction, and by adverſity ndeavours to bring us to conſideration and a ſober ind; and many have been cured this way, and the judg-ents of God have done them that good, which his mer-es and bleſſings could not; for God would ſave us any ay, by his mercy or by his judgment, by ſickneſs or by ealth, by plenty or by want, by what we deſire, or y what we dread; ſo deſirous is he of our repentance nd happineſs, that he leaves no method unattempted, at may probably do us good; he ſtrikes upon every aſſion in the heart of man; he works upon our love by is goodneſs, upon our hopes by his promiſes, and upon ur fears, firſt by his threatnings, and if they be not ffectual, then by his judgments; he tries every affecti-n, and takes hold of it, if by any means he may raw us to himſelf; and will nothing warn us, but what ill ruin us, and render our caſe deſperate and paſt ope?

And if any ſinner be free from outward afflictions and ufferings, yet ſin never fails to carry its own puniſh-ent along with it; there is a ſecret ſting and worm, a ivine Nemeſis and revenge that is bred in the bowels of very ſin, and makes it a heavy puniſhment to itſelf; he conſcience of a ſinner doth frequently torment him, nd his guilt haunts and dogs him wherever he goes; or, whenever a man commits a known and wilful ſin, e drinks down poiſon, which, though it may work owly, yet it will give him many a gripe, and if no eans be uſed to expel it, will deſtroy him at laſt.

So that the long-ſuffering of God is wiſely ordered, nd there is ſuch a mixture of judgments in it, as is ufficient to awaken ſinners, and much more apt to de-er them from ſin, than to encourage them to go on nd continue in it.

3. No-

3. Nothing is farther from the intention of God, t to harden men by his long suffering. This the scrip most expressly declares, 2 Pet. iii. 9. *He is long suffe to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, that all should come to repentance.* He hath a very gracious and merciful design in his patience towards sinn and is therefore good, that he may make us so, and t we may cease to do evil. The event of God's long fering may, by our own fault and abuse of it, prove ruin; but the design and intention of it, is our rep tance. *He winks at the sins of men,* saith the son of Syra *that they may repent.* He passeth them by, and d not take speedy vengeance upon sinners for them, t they may have time to repent of them, and *to m their peace with him, while they are yet in the way.*

Nay, his long-suffering doth not only give space repentance, but is a great argument and encouragem to it. That he is so loth to surprize sinners, that gives them the liberty of second thoughts, time to flect upon themselves, to consider what they have do and to retract it by repentance, is a sufficient intimati that he hath no mind to ruin us, that *he desires not death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from wickedness and live.* And should not this goodness his make us sorry that we have offended him? Do it not naturally lead and invite us to repentanc What other interpretation can we make of his patienc what other use in reason should we make of it, but repent and return, that we may be saved?

4. There is nothing in the long-suffering of God, th is in truth any ground of encouragement to men in a evil course; the proper and natural tendency of God goodness is to lead men to repentance, and by repe tance to bring them to happiness; Rom. ii. 4. *Despise thou the riches of his goodness, and patience, and long-su fering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth th to repentance?* This St. Peter, with relation to the very words of St. Paul, interprets *leading to salvatio* 2 Pet. iii. 15. *And account that the long-suffering of ou Lord is salvation, as our beloved brother Paul also hat written unto you.* Now, where did St. Paul write s unless in this text. *Not knowing that the goodness*

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God leads to repentance? It is not only great ignorance and a very gross mistake, to think that it is the design and intention of God's patience and long-suffering to encourage men in sin; but likewise to think, that, in the nature of the thing, goodness can have any tendency to make men evil; *not knowing that the goodness of God leads to repentance.*

5. That through the long-suffering of God sinners are hardened in their evil ways, is wholly to be ascribed to their abuse of God's goodness; it is neither the end and intention, nor the proper and natural effect of the thing, but the accidental event of it through their own fault. And is this any real objection against the long-suffering of God? May not God be patient, though sinners be impenitent? May not he be good, though we be so foolish as to make an ill use of his goodness? Because men are apt to abuse the mercies and favours of God, is it therefore a fault in him to bestow them upon us? Is it not enough for us to abuse them, but will we challenge God also of unkindness in giving them? May not God use wise and fitting means for our recovery, because we are so foolish as not to make a wise use of them? And must he be charged with our ruin, because he seeks by all means to prevent it? Is it not enough to be injurious to ourselves, but will we be unthankful to God also? When God hath laid out *the riches of his goodness and patience* upon sinners, will they challenge him as accessory to their ruin? as if a foolish heir, that hath prodigally wasted the fair estate that was left him, should be so far from blaming himself, as to charge his father with undoing him. Are these the best returns which the infinite mercy and patience of God hath deserved from us? *Do we thus requite the Lord, foolish people and unwise!*

God's patience would save sinners, but they ruin themselves by their abuse of it: let the blame then lie where it is due, and let God have the glory of his goodness, though men refuse the benefit and advantage of it.

6. And lastly, But because this objection pincheth hardest in one point, *viz.* that God certainly fore-sees that a great many will abuse his long-suffering, to the increasing

ing of their guilt, and the aggravating of their c
demnation: and how is his long-suffering any mercy
goodness to those, who he certainly foreknows wil
the event, be so much the more miserable, for hav
had so much patience extended to them; therefore,
a full answer, I desire these six things may be consider

1*st*. That God designs this life for the trial of our
bedience, that according as we behave ourselves,
may reward or punish us in another world.

2*dly*, That there could be no trial of obedience, n
any capacity of rewards and punishments, but up
the supposition of freedom and liberty; that is, th
we do not do what we do upon force and necessit
but upon free choice.

3*dly*, That God by virtue of the infinite perfectio
of his knowledge, does clearly and certainly foresee a
future events, even those which are most contingen
such as are the arbitrary actions of free and voluntar
agents. This I know hath been denied, but witho
reason; since it is not only contrary to the common ap
prehensions of mankind, from the very light of nature
that God should not foreknow future events, but t
clear and express scripture; and that in such instan
ces, for the sake of which they deny God's fore-know
ledge, in general, of the future actions of free and vo
luntary agents; I mean that the scripture expressly de
clares God's determinate fore-knowledge of the most
wicked actions; as the crucifying of Christ, who is said,
according to the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge
of God, to have been *by wicked hands crucified and slain.*

4*thly*, That the bare fore-knowledge of things future
hath no more influence upon them to make them to be,
than the sight and knowledge of things present hath up
on them to make them to be present. I may see or
know that the sun is risen, without seeing the cause of
its rising; and no more is bare knowledge of future e
vents the cause that they are when they are. And if
any man ask, how God can certainly fore-know things,
which depend upon free and arbitrary causes, unless he
do some way decree and determine them? I answer,
that this is not a fair and reasonable demand to ask of
men, who have but finite understandings, to make out

and

d declare all the ways that infinite knowledge hath of owing and of fore-seeing the actions of free creatures, ithout prejudice to their liberty and freedom of act- g. However, it is of the two, much more credible to ason, that infinite knowledge should certainly fore- ow things, which our understandings cannot imagine w they should be fore-known, than that God should y ways be the author of sin, by determining and de- eeing the wicked actions of men. The first only ar- es the imperfection of our understandings; but the ther lays the greatest blemish and imperfection that n be upon the divine nature.

So that this difficult controversy about the fore-know- dge of God is brought to this point, whether a man d better believe that infinite knowledge may be able fore-know things in a way which our finite under- anding cannot comprehend; or to ascribe something to od, from whence it would unavoidably follow, that he the author of sin. The first is only a modest and just knowledgment of our own ignorance, the last is the most and greatest absurdity that a man can be brought ; and, to say that we cannot believe the fore-know- dge of God, unless we can make out the particular anner of it, is more unreasonable than if an ignorant an should deny a difficult proposition in Euclid or rchimedes to be demonstrated, because he knows not w to demonstrate it.

5*thly*, And, consequently fore-knowledge and liberty ay very well consist; and notwithstanding God's fore- owledge of what men will do, they may be as free if he did not fore-know it. And,

Lastly, That God doth not deal with men according his fore-knowledge of the good or bad use of their berty, but according to the nature and reason of things; d therefore if he be long-suffering towards sinners, d do not cut them off upon the first provocation, t give them a space and opportunity of repentance, d use all proper means and arguments to bring them repentance, and be ready to afford his grace to ex- te good resolutions in them, and to second and assist em, and they refuse and resist all this; their wilful stinacy and impenitency is as culpable, and God's odness and patience as much to be acknowleged, as

if God did not fore-see the abuse of it; because his fo sight and knowledge of what they would do, laid necessity upon them to do what they did.

If a Prince had the privilege of fore-knowledge, God hath, and did certainly fore-see, that a great ma of his subjects would certainly incur the penalty of l laws, and that others would abuse his goodness and c mency to them; yet, if he would govern them like fr and reasonable creatures, he ought to make the sau wise laws to restrain their exorbitancy, and to use t same clemency in all cases that did fairly admit of i as if he did not at all fore-see what they would do, n how they would abuse his clemency; for it is neverth less fit to make wise and reasonable laws, and to gove with equity and clemency, though it were certain fore-seen that they that are governed would act ve foolishly and unreasonably in the use of their liberty. is great goodness in God to give men the means and o portunity of being saved, though they abuse this goo ness to their farther ruin; and he may be heartily gri ved for that folly and obstinacy in men, which he ce tainly foresees will end in their ruin; and may wit great seriousness and sincerity wish they would do othe wise, and were as *wise to do good*, as they are *wilful do evil*. And thus he is represented in scripture, as r gretting the mischief which men wilfully bring upo themselves; *O that they were wise! O that they wou understand, and consider their latter end!*

And this is sufficient to vindicate the goodness God in his patience and long-suffering to sinners, an to make them wholly guilty of all that befals them fo their wilful contempt and abuse of it.

I shall draw some inferences from this whole di course upon this argument.

I. This shews the unreasonableness and perverse disin genuity of men, who take occasion to harden and encou rage themselves in sin from the long-suffering of God which, above all things in the world, should melt an soften them. Thou hast sinned, and art liable to th justice of God; sentence is gone forth, but God respite the execution of it, and hath granted thee a reprieve and time and opportunity to sue out thy pardon. Now

hat use ought we in reason to make of this patience of God towards us? We ought certainly *to break off our sins by* a speedy *repentance, lest iniquity be our ruin*; immediately to sue out our pardon, and *to make our peace with God, while we are yet in the way*, and to resolve, never any more willingly to offend that God who is so gracious and merciful, so long-suffering and full of compassion. But what use do men commonly make of it? They take occasion to confirm and strengthen themselves in their wickedness, and to reason themselves into vain and groundless hopes of impunity. Now, what folly is this, because punishment doth not come, therefore to hasten it, and to draw it down upon ourselves? Because it hath not yet overtaken us, therefore to go forth and meet it? Because there is yet a possibility of escaping it, therefore to take a certain course to make it unavoidable? Because there is yet hope concerning us, therefore to make our case desperate and past remedy? See how unreasonably men bring ruin upon themselves: so that well might the Psalmist ask that question, *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?*

But their folly and unreasonableness is not so great, as their perverseness and disingenuity is greater. To sin, because God is long-suffering, is *to be evil, because he is good*, and to provoke him, because he spares us; this is to *strive with God*, and to contend with his goodness, as if we were resolved to try the utmost length of his patience; and because God is loth to punish, therefore to urge and importune him to that which is so contrary to his inclination.

II. This may serve to convince men of the great evil and danger of thus abusing the long-suffering of God. It is a provocation of the highest nature, because it is to trample upon his dearest attributes, those which he most delights and glories in, his goodness and mercy; for the long-suffering of God is his goodness to the guilty, and his mercy to those who deserve to be miserable.

Nothing makes our ruin more certain, more speedy, and more intolerable, than the abuse of God's goodness and patience. After God had borne long with that rebellious people, the children of Israel, and notwithstanding all

their murmurings, all their infidelity and impeniten had spared them *ten times*, at last he sets his seal to th ruin, Heb. iii. 8, 9. *Harden not your hearts, as in the p vocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: w your fathers proved me, and saw my works forty yea* This was a high provocation indeed, to harden th hearts under the patience and long suffering of God, ter forty years trial and experience of it; verse 1 *Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and sa they are a people that do err in their hearts, for they ha not known my ways.* And what was the issue of all thi Upon this God takes up a fixed resolution to bear l longer with them, but to cut them off from the bl sings he had promised to bestow upon them; *He swa in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest.* whom sware he, that they should not enter into his re but to them that believed not?* or, as the word may rendered, *to them that were disobedient?* that is, to the who went on in their rebellion against him, after had *suffered their manners forty years.*

And as the abuse of God's patience renders our d struction more certain, so more speedy and more intc lerable. We think that because God suffers long, h will suffer always; and because punishment is delaye therefore it will never come; but it will come the soon er for this: so our Lord tells us, Luke xii. when *th servant said, his Lord delayed his coming; the Lord c that servant shall come in a day that he looks not for him and at an hour when he is not aware, and shall cut him i sunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites* None so like to be surprized by the judgments of God as those who trespass so boldly upon his patience.

III. To persuade us to make a right use of the pati ence and long suffering of God, and to comply with the merciful end and design of God therein.

1. It is the design of God's long-suffering to give us a space of repentance. Were it not that God had this design and reasonable expectation from us, he would not reprieve a sinner for one moment, but would execute his judgments upon him, so soon as ever he had offended. This our Saviour declares to us by the parable of the fig-tree, Luke xiii. 6. Were it not that God ex-

pects

pts from us the fruit of repentance, he would *cut us down*, and not suffer us *to cumber the ground:* after he had *waited three years, seeking fruit, and finding none*, he *spares it one year more, to see if it would bear fruit.*

2. The long-suffering of God is a great encouragement to repentance. We see by his patience that he is not ready to take advantage against us; that he spares us when we offend, is a very good sign that he will forgive us if we repent. Thus natural light would reason; and so the King of Nineveh, a Heathen, reasons, *Who can tell if God will turn and repent?* But we are fully assured of this by the gracious declarations of the Gospel, and the way of pardon and forgiveness, which is therein established *through faith in the blood* of Jesus Christ, who was made a *propitiation for the sins of the whole world.*

Therefore the long-suffering of God should be a powerful argument to us, to break off our sins by repentance: for this is the end of God's patience; *He is long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his way and live.* God every where expresseth a vehement desire and earnest expectation of our repentance and conversion. *Jer.* iv. 14. *O Jerusalem! wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayst be saved.* And Jer. xiii. 27. *Wo unto thee, Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?* He who is so patient as to the punishment of our sins, is almost impatient of our repentance for them; *Wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?* And can we stand out against his earnest desire of our happiness, whom we have so often and so long provoked to make us miserable.

Let us then return into ourselves, and think seriously what our case and condition is; how we have lived, and how long the patience of God hath *suffered our manners*, and waited for our repentance, and how inevitable and intolerable the misery of those must be who live and die in the contempt and abuse of it; let us heartily repent of our wicked lives, and say, *What have we done?* How careless have we been of our own

happineſs, and what pains have we taken to undo c
elves!

Let us ſpeedily ſet about this work, becauſe we
not know how long the patience of God may laſt, a
the opportunities of our ſalvation be continued to
This day of God's grace and patience will have an er
therefore as the Prophet exhorts, Iſa. lv. 6. *Seek*
Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while
is near. Now, God graciouſly invites ſinners to cor
to him, and is ready to receive them; nay, if they c
but move towards him, he is ready to go forth and me
them half way; but the time will come, when he w
bid them *depart from him;* when they ſhall cry, *Lor*
Lord, open unto us, and the door of mercy ſhall be ſh
againſt them.

All the while thou delayeſt this neceſſary work, thc
ventureſt thy immortal ſoul, and putteſt thy eternal ſa
vation upon a deſperate hazard; and ſhould God ſnatc
thee ſuddenly away in an impenitent ſtate, what woul
become of thee? Thou art yet in the way, and Go
is yet reconcileable, but death is not far off, and per
haps much nearer to thee than thou art aware; at th
beſt, thy life is uncertain, and death will infallibly pu
a period to this day of God's grace and patience.

Repentance is a work ſo neceſſary, that, methinks,
no man ſhould loſe ſo much time as to deliberate, whe-
ther he ſhould ſet about it or not; *De neceſſariis nulla*
eſt deliberatio; "No man deliberates about what he
"muſt do, or be undone if he do it not." It is a work
of ſo great conſequence and concernment, and the delay
of it ſo infinitely dangerous, that one would think no
wiſe man could entertain a thought of deferring it.
What greater folly and ſtupidity can there be, than for
men to venture their immortal ſouls, and to run an ap-
parent hazard in matters of everlaſting conſequence!

This day of God's patience is the great opportunity
of our ſalvation; and if we let it ſlip, it is never to be re-
covered; if we miſ improve this time of our life, we
ſhall not be permitted to live it over again to improve it
better. Our ſtate of trial ends with this life, after that
God will prove us no more; then we ſhall wiſh, *O that*
I had known, in that my day, the things which belonged to
my

y peace! but now they are hid from mine eyes: there-ore, to-day whilſt it is called to-day, harden not your earts, make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put ot off from day to day; for ſuddenly ſhall the wrath of he Lord break forth, and in thy ſecurity thou ſhalt be eſtroyed. Exerciſe repentance in the time of health, and efer not till death to be juſtified.

SERMON CLII.

The power of God.

PSAL. lxii. 11.

God hath ſpoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God.

IN treating of the attributes of God, I have conſidered thoſe which relate to the divine underſtanding, to which I referred his knowledge and wiſdom; thoſe alſo which relate to the divine will; *viz.* God's juſtice, truth, holineſs, and goodneſs: I come now to conſider his power of acting, which is his omnipotency; this I ſhall ſpeak to from theſe words.

In the beginning of this Pſalm, David declares that God was the great object of his truſt and confidence, and that all his hopes and expectation of ſafety and deliverance were from him, ver. 1, 2. And this makes him challenge his enemies for all their miſchievous qualities and devices againſt him, as vain attemps, ver. 3, 4. Hereupon he chargeth himſelf to continue his truſt and confidence in God, from whom was all his expectation, and who was able to ſave and deliver him, ver. 5, 6, 7. And from his example and experience, he encourageth and exhorts all others to truſt in God, ver. 8. and that from two arguments.

1. Becauſe all other objects of our truſt and confidence are vain and inſufficient, and will fail thoſe that rely upon them. If we rely upon any thing in this world, it muſt either be perſons or things; but we cannot ſafely repoſe our truſt in either of theſe. Not in perſons:

ſons: they may be reduced to one of theſe two heads either high or low: thoſe that are of a mean condition it would be in vain to truſt them; they that cannot ſecure themſelves from meanneſs, cannot ſecure others from miſchief: *Men of low degree are vanity:* but the great ones of the world, they would ſeem to promiſe ſomething of aſſiſtance and ſecurity to us; but if we depend upon them, they will fruſtrate us: *Men of high degree are a lie.* As for the things of the world, that which men uſually place their confidence in, is riches: theſe are either got by unlawful, or lawful means; if they be ill gotten, by oppreſſion or robbery, they will be ſo far from ſecuring us from evil, that they will bring it upon us; if they be well gotten, they are of an uncertain nature, that we have little reaſon to place our hopes in them; *If riches increaſe, ſet not your heart upon them;* that is, your hope; for heart in ſcripture ſignifies any of the affections.

2. Becauſe God is the proper object of our truſt and confidence. We may ſafely rely upon any one, in whom theſe two things concur, a power to help us, and goodneſs to incline him ſo to do. Now, David tells us, that both theſe are eminently in God, and do in a peculiar manner belong to him; *power,* ver. 11. and *goodneſs,* ver. 12.

I ſhall ſpeak to that which David makes the firſt ground of our confidence, *the power of God; power belongs to God:* for which he brings the teſtimony of God himſelf; *once hath God ſpoken, yea twice have I heard this.* Some interpreters trouble themſelves about the meaning of this expreſſion, as if it did refer to ſome particular revelation of God; and then again, they are troubled how to reconcile God's ſpeaking this but once, with David's hearing it twice: but I do not love to ſpy myſteries in thoſe expreſſions, which are capable of a plain ſenſe; for I underſtand no more by it but this, that God hath ſeveral times revealed this; he frequently declared himſelf by this attribute, *once, yea twice;* that is, he hath *ſpoken it often,* and *David* had *heard it often.* This is anſwerable to that phraſe of the Latins, *Semel atque iterum;* and it is uſual in all writers, to uſe a certain numbe rfor an uncertain, and particularly among

ong the poets. *Felices ter & amplius,* Hor. And so in e poetical writers of scripture, Job v. 19. he hath *delivered thee in six troubles, yea, in seven there shall no il touch thee;* that is, in several and various troubles. clef. xi. 2. *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight;* at is, distribute thy charity to many; and which is arest to this, Job xl. 5. *Once have I spoken, but I will t answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no farther;* at is, I have had several discourses with my friends; d, xxxiii. 14. *God speaketh once, yea twice, in a dream, a vision of the night;* that is, God reveals himself in veral ways and manners to men; so here *God hath oken once, yea twice,* that is, God hath often declared his. And if I would be so curious to refer to a particur declaration of God, I should think, that it related ther to the preface to the law, *I am the Lord thy God,* hat is, the great and powerful God, *that brought thee t of the land of Egypt;* or rather to the declaration hich God made of himself to Abraham, Isaac, and acob, by the name of *the Almighty God,* Gen. xvii. 1. oncerning which revelation of God, it is said expressly, Exod. vi. 3. *I appeared unto Abraham, and Isaac, and acob, by the name of God Almighty; but by my name Jeovah, was I not known to them.*

But that which I design to speak to is the proposition itself, that *power belongs to God;* that is, that the xcellency of power, power in its highest degree and erfection; *all power belongs to God,* that is, that omnipotence is a property or perfection of the divine nature.

In the handling of this, I shall shew,

1. What we are to understand by the omnipotence of God.

2. That this perfection belongs to God.

First, What we are to understand by the omnipotence of God. And this I shall consider,

1. As to the principle. And,

2. As to the exercise of it.

I. As to the principle, it is an ability to do all things, the doing of which speaks power and perfection; that is, whatever is not repugnant either to the nature of things, or of God; whatever does not imply a contradiction in the thing, or an imperfection in the doer; an ability

ability to do all things which are consistent with itſ and with the divine nature and perfection; by wh we must mean an executive power, the effect wher is without himself; for what he is said to do wit himself, the acts of his understanding and will, as conceive his will to be distinct from his power, are r to be referred to his omnipotence. To have a rig conception of omnipotence, we must imagine the m perfect active principle that we can, and it is still som thing more perfect than that, or any thing we can magine. To help our conception,

1. Let us imagine a principle from which all oth power is derived, and upon which it depends, and which it is perfectly subject and subordinate.

2. A perfect active principle, which can do, not on ly what any finite being or creature can do, bu what all beings joined together can do; nay, mor and greater things than they all can do.

3. A perfect active principle, to which nothing ca make any considerable, much less effectual resistance which can check and countermand at pleasure, an carry down before it, and annihilate all other power that we can imagine besides this; because we cannot i magine any other power, that is not derived from this and does not depend upon it.

4. A perfect active principle, which can do all things in a most perfect manner, and can do all things at once and in an instant, and that with ease. We can but do one thing at once; and the greater and more considerable it is, the more time it will take us to do it, and we find it the harder and more difficult to be done: but God, to whose knowledge all things are present at once, and together, and the acts of whose will are as quick and perfect as of his understanding, hath a power answerable to the perfection of both; and therefore it is as easy to him to do all things, as one thing; at once, as successively, and in time. For this is the privilege of an infinite spirit, that it does not only act without hands and material engines or instruments, as every spirit doth, but without motion from one place to another, because he is every where, and fills all places; he acts *per modum voluntatis*, as if his actings were nothing else but a willing that

such

ſuch a thing be done, and, *ipſo facto*, every thing is ſo, as he wills it ſhould be, and when he wills it ſhould be; as if things did ſtart up into being, or vaniſh out of being, as if they did break forth into being, and ſculk again into nothing, and undergo ſuch and ſuch changes, *ad nutum voluntatis*, "at the beck of his will." And this is the moſt perfect way of acting that can be imagined, which the ſcripture ſeems to expreſs to us, when it preſents God, as *making things by his word, upholding all things by the word of his power;* as if he did but ſpeak the word, and ſay, *Let ſuch a thing be, and it was ſo;* as if there were nothing more required to the doing of any thing, but an expreſs act of the divine will, which is all we can underſtand by God's ſpeaking by his word and voice, and ſaying, *Let things be;* but the leaſt that it can ſignify, is the quick and ſpeedy manner of working, whereby God is able to do things in an inſtant, as ſoon as a word can be ſpoken.

And as he can do all things at once, and in an inſtant, ſo with eaſe, without any pain or laborious endeavour; for what is it that can object any difficulty to him? At the firſt creation of things, there was nothing to reſiſt him; and ſince the creation, there is nothing but what was made by him, and conſequently all, whoſe power is derived from him, and depends upon him, and is ſubject to him, and being finite and limited, is infinitely unequal to the infinite power of God; ſo that we may imagine the divine power would paſs through all the reſiſtance that all created power can make, and all the difficulties it can object to it, with more eaſe than a bullet paſſeth through the thin air, or a man would paſs through a net of cobweb.

5. The moſt perfect active principle we can imagine, the utmoſt bounds and limits of whoſe perfection we cannot imagine, that is, when we have imagined it to be as perfect, and to act in as perfect a manner as we can imagine, yet we have not reached the perfection of it; but after all this, that it can do many things more than we can imagine, and in a manner much more perfect than we can imagine. This is the omnipotence of God as to the principle, which hath no bounds and limits. And,

II. As

II. As to the exercise of it, it is only limited by t divine will and wisdom. The divine will determines to its exercise, the divine wisdom directs, and regula the exercise of it; that is, God exerciseth his pow willingly, and not by necessity, and in such manne for the producing such effects, and in order to such en and purposes, as seem best to his wisdom. Hence he said *to act all things according to his good pleasure, a according to the counsel of his will;* that is, freely a wisely.

As to the extent of this power, I said it was an ab lity to do all things that are consistent with itself, ar with the nature and perfection of God.

First, That are consistent with itself, that is, with power to do all things. It is a contradiction to ima gine, that omnipotence can do that, which if it coul be done, would render all power insignificant. Upo this account, the divine power is not said to extend t the working of any thing which implies a contradictio and the terms whereof speak a repugnancy to one ano ther, and mutually destroy one another, and the doin whereof is contrary to the nature of the thing which i supposed to be done, that is, is nonsense, and cannot b imagined to be. For example, that a thing should b and not be at the same time. For a power to make a thing to be, so as it should not be while it is, signifie nothing, because such a being as is not, is nothing; an to make such a being, would be to do nothing, and con sequently such a power would signify nothing. So like wise we cannot say, that the divine power can cause that the same thing should be made and not be made; that that which hath been, should not have been; for the power which makes a thing, so as that it was not made, and causeth a thing to have been, so as that it hath not been, does nothing: and consequently is no power. Nor can we say, that the divine power can effect that any thing should be made by itself, that is, be the cause of its own being; for that would be to cause that a thing should be before it is, that is, be when it is not, which signifies nothing. We cannot say, that the divine power can effect, that twice two should not make four; for that would be to cause that things should not be what they

are

re, if they be at all; which is to cauſe that things ould be, and not be at all, when they are, which mounts to nothing.

We cannot ſay, the divine power can make a ſound o be ſeen, and colour to be heard; for that would be o make colour and ſound all one; that is, things that iffer, to be the ſame while they differ, which is to nake colour and ſound not to be colour and ſound while hey are ſo; which is to do nothing, and conſequently rgues no power.

We cannot ſay, the divine power can make that which is intrinſically and eſſentially good to be evil; nd on the contrary: or that which is neceſſarily true o be fal e; and on the contrary. For to make that which is intrinſically and eſſentially good to be evil, is o make that which is always good to be ſometimes evil; that is, to be evil whilſt it is good, that is, to make good and evil all one; which is to bring two things together, which ſo ſoon as they do exiſt, deſtroy one another, which is to no purpoſe, becauſe it is to do juſt nothing; and there is the ſame reaſon of true and falſe.

We cannot ſay, that the power of God can cauſe that the ſame thing ſhould be hot and cold, dead and alive at the ſame time, becauſe theſe deſtroy one another: and if they were both, neither of them would be, and ſo the effect we attribute to this power would be nothing.

We cannot ſay, that the divine power can effect, that the ſame impreſſion ſhould give a thing two contrary motions, upward and downward at the ſame time; that the ſame body ſhould be in two contrary poſtures, in motion and at reſt, and in ſeveral places, which are the contradictions of tranſubſtantiation; for the ſame body to be at the ſame time in two ſeveral places, is to be limited and circumſcribed by each of theſe, that is, ſo to be in each of them, as not to be in the other, or in any other; ſo that if it be in this place, it is not in that, nor in any other beſides this; if it be in that place, it is not in this, nor any other beſides that; but if it be in two, it is both in this and in that, and therefore in neither of them, nor any where elſe; ſo that a power to make a body to be in two places at once, is a power to make it to be no where, that is, not to be at all, which is no

power; and there is the same reason of the same body's being in contrary motion, or in motion and at rest, or in two contrary postures at the same time.

So that by all these instances, it appears, that a power to do any thing which implies a contradiction, and is repugnant to the nature of things, signifies nothing; and the supposed effect of it is only to bring terms together, which, if they could be brought together, so soon as they meet, will mutually take away and destroy one another, which would be vain, and to no purpose.

I have the more explicitely laid open these contradictions, with relation to the gross doctrine of transubstantiation, in which all or most of the contradictions which I have mentioned, are involved. I know they stifly deny, that these contradictions follow from that doctrine, and use pitiful shifts to avoid them; but being not able to satisfy themselves that way, if the worst should come to the worst, they can grant these contradictions, but then they fly to the power of God, which can do things which we call contradictions; or else they say, there are as many contradictions in the doctrine of the Trinity, which all Christians believe. And thus they reproach Christianity to defend Popery; and if they cannot persuade men to be Papists, do what they can to make them Atheists, or at least to hinder them from being Christians; but there is not so much malice in this objection, but there is as little strength. Is it any contradiction, that the same thing should be three and one in several respects? which is all that the scripture teacheth concerning the Trinity: but if men will undertake to explain this more particularly than God thought fit to do, and do it in such a manner, as that they cannot free themselves from contradiction, let them look to it, the Christian religion is not at all concerned in this, farther than to censure such mens boldness and curiosity.

But against this exemption of things that imply a contradiction from the compass and extent of the divine power, there are two objections which are more considerable, and deserve to be taken notice of.

I. We grant God's fore-knowledge of future events, which seem to us to be impossible to be fore-known. Now, why may we not as well grant that God can do things

nings which seem to us impossible to be done by any ther power, as foreknow things which it is impossible or any understanding to know? for why should we retend to know the utmost of what infinite power an do, any more than the utmost of what infinite understanding can know?

Answ. I know no reason but that the argument should e granted, if there were an equal necessity of granting he possibility of those things which seem to us impossible o be done, that there is of granting the possibility of ore-knowing future contingencies, though they seem to s impossible to be known. We must grant the possibiity of fore-knowing future cotingencies, because the cripture, which we believe to be a divine revelation, xpressly tells us, that God doth fore-know them, and ives us instances of it in several prophecies and predicions. Now, if any man can shew me as expre's texts, which say, that God can make a body to be in two plaes at once, I would believe it, though I do not see how t is possible; because it is reasonable I should believe hat infinite power can do many things, the possibility of which my finite understanding cannot reach. Now, whereas the Papists say, the scripture hath said that rom which this necessarily follows, viz. *This is my body;* his is not enough, unless they could either prove, that t is necessary to understand all texts of scripture in a rigorous and strict propriety of the letter, without admitng of any trope or figure in the words; which they do ot pretend; or else shew a clear reason why this hould be understood so, more than a thousand others; which they have not done, and I think never can do.

But if it be farther argued; if we grant in one case, hat those things which seem to be contradictions to us, may be possible, why not in all cases? Unless we had ome certain way of distinguishing between seeming contradictions and real ones. And if we grant all contradictions possible, then there is no reason to exempt these from the extent of the divine power; but we may safely say, that the divine power can make a thing to be, and not to be at the same time. To this I answer,

1. I do not grant, that any thing, which seems to me to be a contradiction, ought to be granted by me to be

poſſible, unleſs I have higher aſſurance, and greater reaſon to believe it to be poſſible, than I have to believe it to be a contradiction: for example, ſuppoſe it were clearly revealed in ſcripture, that two bodies may be in the ſame place, and at the ſame time (which is not nor any thing like it); then having a revelation for this and no revelation that it is not a contradiction, I have higher aſſurance, and greater reaſon to believe it poſſible, than that it is a contradiction; and, conſequently I have reaſon to believe it is no contradiction, and that from thence it would not follow, that the ſame thing may be, and not be at the ſame time: but though in caſe of divine revelation, I may believe that to be no contradiction, which ſeems to me to be a contradiction; yet I am not without great neceſſity and clear evidence, to offer violence to reaſon, and affront the faculty of underſtanding, which God hath endowed me withal, by entertaining any thing which ſeems to me to be a contradiction, which the Papiſts do in the buſineſs of tranſubſtantiation, without any evidence of revelation, and conſequently without neceſſity.

2. But if this were revealed in ſcripture, that the ſame thing may be, and not be at the ſame time, I could have no reaſon to believe that, becauſe I could have no aſſurance, if that were true, that the ſcriptures were a divine revelation, or that it were to be believed if it were; for if it were true, that the ſame thing may be and not be, then a divine revelation may be no divine revelation; and when I am bound to believe a thing, I may be bound at the ſame time not to believe it, and ſo all things would fall into uncertainty, and the foundation of all aſſurance, and of all duty and obedience, both of faith and practice, would be taken away. The

II. Objection is from the power of creation, which is generally acknowledged to be a making of ſomething out of nothing. Now, ſay the objectors, this ſeems as palpable a contradiction as any thing elſe.

Anſw. To us indeed, who converſe with material things, and never ſaw any thing made but out of preexiſtent matter, it is very hard to conceive how any thing ſhould be created, that is, produced out of nothing: but every thing that is ſtrange is not a contradiction.

liction. It is ſtrange to us, and hard to conceive, that here ſhould be ſuch a thing as a ſpirit, who never ſaw, nor can ſee any thing but matter; and yet we grant there are ſpirits. It is hard to us to conceive how any thing ſhould be made out of matter; and yet ſpirit, if it were made of any thing pre-exiſtent, cannot be made of matter: but if we will attend to thoſe common dictates of reaſon, which every man, whether he will or no, muſt aſſent to, we may eaſily underſtand creation to be poſſible, and free from contradiction. For the clearing of this, I will proceed by theſe ſteps.

1. The true notion of creation is the bringing of ſomething into being, which before had no being at all; for the phraſe of making ſomething out of nothing, or out of no pre-exiſtent matter, does miſlead our underſtanding into odd conceits, as if nothing could be the material cauſe of ſomething, or as if nothing could be what is material.

2. Every one muſt grant, that ſomething is; for we ſee that things are, however they came to be.

3. Every one muſt grant, that ſomething is of itſelf, whether matter, or that being which we call God.

4. Every one muſt grant, that that which was of itſelf was always; for nothing can begin to be of itſelf.

5. It is much more eaſy to conceive how a thing, that once was not, might ſometime be brought into being by another, than how a thing ſhould be always of itſelf; for that which once was not is ſuppoſed to have ſomething before it, by which it might be made, tho' not out of which it was made; but that which was always, neither had nor could have any thing, by which or out of which it could be made. And why cannot a thing come into being, when there was nothing before it, out of which it was made, as well as a thing be always, when there could not be any thing before it, out of which it ſhould be?

Secondly, I exempt thoſe things from the extent of omnipotence, which imply imperfection, which are contrary to the nature and perfection of God, both natural and moral imperfections; for theſe alſo deſtroy power, becauſe they are not arguments of power, but of impotence. Natural imperfections, as to die, to be ſick,

to be in want, to eat, to sleep, to forget, *&c.* Mo imperfections, those which contradict the holiness God, as sin and vice, or to compel any to sin; whi contradict his goodness, as to be cruel; which contr dict his truth, as to lie, to deceive, to break his pr mise, to deny himself; Tit. i. 2. 2 Tim. ii. 13. Jan i. 13. he is said to be ἀπείραστος κακῶν; contrary to t constancy and immutability of his nature, as to chan his decree, to repent; contrary to justice and equit as for ever to spare and to pardon obstinate sinners, ter nally to punish innocent and good men; for the are moral imperfections, and contradict the holines and truth, and goodness, and justice, and immutabilit of the divine nature; and that distinction between God absolute and ordinate power, that is, that God hath a absolute power of doing some things, which yet, upo supposition of his decree, or promise, or goodness, o justice, he cannot do, is vain and frivolous, unless me mean by it only this, that some things which argue a imperfection, do not imply a contradiction, which i most true; but both these are absolutely and equall impossible to God. I proceed to the

Second Thing I proposed, that this perfection belong to God; and this I shall shew,

1. From the dictates of natural light.

2. From the scripture, or divine revelation.

1. From the dictates of natural light. This was one of the most usual titles which the Heathens gave to their supreme deity, *Optimus Maximus;* next to his goodness they placed his greatness, which does chiefly appear in his power; and they did not only attribute a great power to him, but an omnipotence. *Nihil est quod Deus efficere non potest,* saith Tully *de Div.* Now, their natural reason did convince them, that this perfection did belong to God, by these three arguments:

1. From those two great instances and expressions of his power, creation and providence; for the Heathens did generally acknowledge the making of the world, and the preservation and government of it, to be the effects of power, determined by goodness, and regulated by wisdom. Hence they gave those titles to God of *opifex rerum,* and *rector mundi.* I say generally, I except

cet Ariſtotle, who ſuppoſed the world not to have been made, but to have been from eternity; and Epicurus with his followers, who aſcribed the regular and orderly frame of nature to a happy caſualty and fortune concourſe of atoms: but generally the wiſer did look upon the vaſt frame of nature, this ſtately fabrick of the world, and the upholding and preſerving of it, as an argument of a divine and inviſible power. And ſo the Apoſtle tells us, Rom. i. 20. that by the light of nature, *the inviſible things of God were clearly ſeen by the things that were made, even his eternal power and Godhead.*

2. Becauſe all other perfections, without this, would be inſignificant and ineffectual, or elſe could not be at all. Without this, goodneſs would be an empty piece of good meaning, and not able to give any demonſtration of itſelf; knowledge would be an idle ſpeculation; and wiſdom to contrive things, without power to effect them, would be an uſeleſs thing. There would be no ſuch thing as juſtice, if the divine nature were without power to reward and puniſh; no ſuch thing as faithfulneſs, if he had not a power to perform what he promiſes; no providence, for it would be in vain for him that hath no power, to take upon him to govern and intermeddle in the affairs of the world.

3. Without this there could be no religion. Take away the power of God, and there can be no foundation of faith and truſt, no reaſon for fear; all arguments from hope and fear would be taken away; we could not expect any good, nor fear any harm from an impotent being that could do nothing. The ſanction of God's laws would be taken away. To give authority to laws, there muſt not only be a right to command, but power to back thoſe commands; the grand ſecurity and laſt reſort of all government and authority is power. James iv. 12. *There is one law-giver, who is able to ſave, and to deſtroy.* None can be a law-giver but he that hath this power, to reward and puniſh, to make men happy or miſerable, *to ſave or to deſtroy.* Men would not pray to God, nor make any addreſs to him, if they did not believe he were able to ſupply their wants, and relieve them in their ſtraits; *Nec in hunc furorem omnes mor-*

mortales consensissent alloquendi surda numina & inc ces deos, Sen. There would be no encouragemen men to serve God, if they did not believe that he able to reward them, and bring them to happiness, to defend them against all the enemies of their well so that it should not be in the power of the most n cious spirits to hinder them of their happiness.

II. From scripture, or divine revelation. In ducing texts to this purpose, I will proceed by t steps.

1. Take notice of those which in general asc power, and might, and strength to God. Psal. xxiv. *The Lord, strong and mighty. So girt with power; mighty God; thine is the greatness and the power; th is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.* Of same nature are those places which call upon all cr tures to ascribe this to God; *Give unto the Lord, mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength.*

2. Those which ascribe this to God in an emine degree. Job ix. 4. *He is mighty in strength, excelle in power; who is like unto him? The Lord Jehovah everlasting strength.*

3. Those texts which ascribe such a power as tra scends any human or created power. Such as tho which express all the power which men have to be d rived from God. John xix. 11. *Thou couldest have power at all, except it were given thee from above.* An those which advance the power of God above the powe of men; Luke xviii. 27. *The things which are impos sible with men, are possible with God: He is able to d exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think* Eph. iii. 20. 2 Chron. xx. 6. Job ix. 4. *According to his mighty power, whereby he is able to subdue all thing to himself.* Phil. iii. 21. Dan. iv. 35. Those which declare all things to be equally easy to him, and nothing difficult: *There is nothing too hard for thee.* Jer. xxxii. 17. 2 Chron. xiv. 11. 1 Sam xiv. 6.

4. Those which ascribe all power to him, by the titles of *Almighty, All-sufficient.* Gen. xvii. 1. Rev. iv. 8. 11. xv. 3. xvi. 7. xix. 26. Job xlii. 2. *Thou canst do all things.* Matth. xix. 6. Mark xx. 27. Luke i. 37.

I have

have dispatched what I proposed upon this argument; give me leave to apply all in the following particulars.

Use. *First*, The consideration of God's omnipotence must cause terror to wicked men. All this power which I have described, or rather, which is so great that I cannot describe it, is engaged against sinners; *His power and his wrath is against all that forsake him*, Ezra viii. 22. And who knows what those words signify, Psal. xc. 11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger? As is thy fear, so is thy wrath.* There is no passion in the heart of man more infinite than our fear, it troubles us with jealousy and suspicion of the utmost that may happen; but when we have extended our fears to the utmost, the power of God's wrath reacheth farther. Whenever we sin, we challenge the Almighty, and dare infinite power to do its worst to us. Job xv 25. speaking of the wicked man, *He stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty.* Whom wilt thou fear, if not him who can make thee extremely happy or miserable for ever? *Will ye provoke the Lord to jealousy? are ye stronger than he?* Because he doth nothing against thee for the present, think'st thou he can do nothing? Nah. i. 3. *He is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not acquit the wicked.* There is a day coming, when *the Son of Man shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.*

Secondly, The consideration of God's omnipotence would check the pride and vain confidence of men. What have we to be proud of? *What have we that we have not received? Where then is cause of boasting? Who may glory in his sight?* Those that have the greatest power should remember whence it is derived, and render back the glory of it to the fountain of it. Psal. xix. 1. *Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord glory and strength.* So likewise it should take men off from relying upon their own strength, which at the best is but *an arm of flesh*, as the scripture calls it, for the weakness of it. Do we not see, that many times *the battle is not to the strong?* That things are not done *by might and by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.* When he appears against the most potent, *their hearts*

hearts melt within them, and there is no more spirit in them, as it is said of the mighty inhabitants of Canaan, Josh. v. 1.

Thirdly, We should make this omnipotence of God the object of our trust and confidence. This is the most proper use we can make of this doctrine, as David does in this Psalm; and this was used for a form of blessing the people in the name of God; Psal. cxxxiv. 3. *The Lord, that made heaven and earth, bless thee.* And David, when he magnifies God's deliverance of his people from the multitude of their enemies, resolves it into this, *our help standeth in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.* Thus did the great patron and example of faith encourage and support his confidence in God in a very difficult trial; he staggered not at it, because *he believed God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not, as though they were: therefore against hope he believed in hope,* &c. Rom. iv. 17 &c. This gives life to all our devotion, to be perswaded that *God is able to do for us exceedingly above what we can ask or think,* and that *his is the kingdom, the power and the glory.*

I shall only caution two things, as to our reliance on the power of God.

1. Labour to be such persons, to whom God hath promised that he will engage and employ his omnipotence for their good. If we hope for any good from the Almighty, we must *walk before him, and be perfect* as he said to Abraham. Good men have a peculiar interest in God's power; hence he is called *the strength of Israel, and the mighty one of Israel.* If we do what God requires of us, we may expect that he will put forth his power, and exert his arm for us; but if we disobey, we must expect he will manifest his power against us, Ezra viii. 22. When we *do well,* we may *commit the keeping of our souls to him,* 1 Pet. iv. 19.

2. Our expectations from the omnipotence of God must be with submission to his pleasure, and goodness, and wisdom; we must not expect that God will manifest his power when we think there is occasion for it; but when it seems best to him, he will so employ his omnipotence, as to manifest his goodness and wisdom.

And

nd with these two cautions, we may rely upon him
ll our wants, both spiritual and temporal; for his
he power can *give us all things that pertain to life*
godliness, 2 Pet. i. 3. We may trust him at all
s, for the omnipotent God *neither slumbereth nor*
eth; the Almighty fainteth not, neither is he weary.
st ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is
lasting strength.

SERMON CLIII.

The spirituality of the divine nature.

JOHN iv. 24.

God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.

THese are the words of our Saviour to the woman of Samaria, who was speaking to him of the difference between the the Samaritans and Jews, concerning religion; Verse 20. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; but ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.* Christ tells her, *The time was coming, when the worshippers of God should neither be confined to that mountain, nor to Jerusalem; but men should worship the Father in spirit and in truth;* when this carnal, and ceremonial, and typical worship of God should be exalted into a more spiritual, more real, and true, and substantial religion, which should not be confined to one temple, but should be universally diffused through the world. Now, such a worship as this is most agreeable to the nature of God; *for he is a spirit, and those who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* In the words we have,

First, A proposition laid down, *God is a spirit.*

Secondly, A corollary, or inference, deduced from it, *they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* I shall speak of the proposition, as that which con-

concerns my present design; and afterwards something to the corollary, or inference, deduced it, together with some other inferences drawn this truth, by way of application.

First, *That God is a spirit.* This expression is gular, and not to be parallelled again in the script indeed we have often mention made in the scriptu *the spirit of God, and the spirit of the Lord,* whic gnifies a divine power and energy; and of *the holy rit,* signifying the third person in the Trinity; G called *the God of the spirits of all flesh,* Numb. xvi. xxvii. 16. much in the same sense, as he is called *Father of spirits,* Heb. xii. 9. that is, the Creato the souls of men; but we no where meet with this pression, or any other equivalent to it, that *God spirit,* but only in this place; nor had it been used h but to prove, that the best worship of God, that wh is most proper to him, is spiritual: so that the th which our Saviour here intends, is not to prove the ritual nature of God, but that his worship ought to spiritual; nor indeed is there any necessity that it sho have been any where said in scripture, that *God spirit,* it being the natural notion of a God; no m than it is necessary that it should be told us, that G is good, or that he is infinite, and eternal, and the lik or that the scripture should prove to us the being o God. All these are manifest by the light of nature; a if the scripture mentions them, it is *ex abundanti,* a it is usually in order to some farther purpose.

For we are to know, that the scripture supposeth to be men, and to partake of the common notions human nature; and therefore doth not teach us philo sophy, nor solicitously instruct us in those things whic are born with us, that supposeth the knowledge of thes and makes use of these common principles and notion which are in us concerning God, and the immortalit of our souls, and the life to come, to excite us to our du ty, and quicken our endeavours after happiness. For I d not find that the doctrine of the immortality of the sou is any where expressly delivered in scripture, but take for granted; in like manner, that the scripture doth no solicitously instruct us in the natural notions which we have

ave of God, but supposeth them known to us; and if mention them, it is not so much in order to knowdge as to practice; and therefore we need not wonder at this expression, which doth set forth to us the nature f God, is but once used in scripture, and that brought upon occasion, and for another purpose, because it is thing naturally known. Plato says, that God is ἀσώματος, "without body." In like manner Tully, *Nec enim Deus ipse qui intelligitur à nobis alio modo intelligi potest, nisi mens quædam soluta & libera; segregata ab omni concretione mortali;* "We cannot conceive of God, but as of a pure mind, entirely free from all mortal composition or mixture." And Plutarch after him, νοῦς γὰρ ὁ θεὸς, χωριστὸν εἶδος, τελέως τὸ ἀμιγὲς πάσης ὕλης, μεμενὶ πάθεϊ συμπεπλεγμένον, "God is a mind, an abstract being, pure from all matter, and disentangled from whatever is passible or capable of suffering."

So that natural light informing us that *God is a spirit*, there was no need why the scripture should inculate this: it is an excellent medium or argument to rove that the worship of God should chiefly be spiritul; and although it was not necessary that it should ave been mentioned for itself, that is, to inform us of a hing which we could not otherwise know; yet the wisom of God, by the express mention of this, seems to ave provided against an error, which some weaker and roffer spirits might be subject to. You know God is leased, by way of condescension and accommodation of imself to our capacity, to represent himself to us in cripture by human imperfections; and gives such descriptions of himself, as if he had a body, and bodily embers. Now, to prevent any error or mistake that ight be occasioned hereby, it seems very becoming the visdom of God, some where in scripture expressly to declare the spiritual nature of God, that none through veakness or wilfulness might entertain gross apprehenions of him. In speaking to this proposition, I shall,

1. Explain what is meant by *a spirit.*
2. Endeavour to prove to you, that *God is a spirit.*
3. Answer an objection or two.
4. Draw some inferences or corollaries from the whole.

I. For the explication of the notion of *a spirit*: I shall not trouble you with the strict philosophical notion of it, as that it is such a substance as is penetrable, that is, may be in the same place with a body, and neither keep out the body, nor be kept out by it; and that the parts which we imagine in it cannot be divided, that is, really separated and torn from one another, as the parts of a body; but I will give you a negative description of it. A spirit is not matter, it doth not fall under any of our senses, it is that which we cannot see nor touch; it is not a body, not flesh and blood, and bones; for so we find spirit in scripture opposed to flesh and body; Isa. xxxi. 3. *Their horses are flesh, and not spirit.* So Luke xxiv. when Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, they were terrified, and supposed it had been a spirit, ver. 39 but he said, *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.* The most usual description of a spirit is by these negatives, it is not a body, hath not flesh and bones, doth not consist of matter, or of any thing that falls under our senses, that we can see or touch.

II. For the proof of this proposition, that *God is a spirit.* This is not to be proved by way of demonstration; for there is nothing before God, or which can be a cause of him, but by way of conviction, by shewing the absurdity of the contrary. The first and most natural notion that we have of God, is, that he is a being every way perfect; and from this notion we must argue concerning the properties which are attributed to God, and govern all our reasonings concerning God by this; so that when any thing is said of God, the best way to know whether it be to be attributed to him, is to enquire whether it be a perfection or not; if it be, it belongs to him; if it be not, it is to be removed from him; and if any man ask, why I say God is so, or so, a spirit, or good, or just? the best reason that can be given is, because these are perfections, and the contrary to these are imperfections. So that if I shew, that it would be an imperfection for God to be imagined to be a body, or matter, I prove that he is a spirit, because it is an imperfection, that is, an absurdity, to imagine him any thing

ning else: to imagine God to be a body, or matter, both evidently contradict four great perfections of God.

1. His infiniteness, or the immensity of his being. Grant me but these two things, that there is something in the world besides God, some other matter, as the heavens, the air, the earth, and all those things which we see; and grant me that two bodies cannot be in the same place at once, and then it will evidently follow, that where-ever these are, God is shut out; and consequently, God should not be infinite, nor in all places; and so much as there is of another matter in the world besides God, so many breaches there would be in the divine nature, so many hiatus's.

2. The knowledge and wisdom of God. It cannot be imagined how mere matter can understand, how it can distinctly comprehend such variety of objects, and, at one view, take in past, present, and to come. Tully, speaking of spirits, saith, *Animorum nulla in terris origo inveniri potest;* "Their original cannot be found upon "earth; for," saith he, "there is no material or bodily "thing," *Quod vim memoriæ, mentis, cogitationis habeat, quod & præterita teneat, & futura provideat, & complecti possit præsentia; quæ sola divina sunt;* "Which hath the "power of memory, of understanding, of thought; "which can retain things past, foresee things future, "and comprehend things present; all which powers "are purely divine."

3. Freedom and liberty. For the laws of matter are necessary, nor can we imagine any αὐτεξούσιον, any "arbitrary principle" in it. This puzzled the Epicureans, as we see in Lucretius; "For if," says he, "all "things move by certain and necessary laws, and there "be a connexion of the parts of matter unto each o-"ther, so that if you move this, that must necessarily "be moved; whence," saith he, "is liberty?" *Unde est hæc inquam fatis avulsa voluntas;* "Whence is this "principle of will, whose motions are not under any "law of necessity?"

4. Goodness. This follows from the former; for he is not good who does not know what he does, nor does it freely; so that, take away understanding and liberty, and you take away goodness: now, take away from

God infiniteness, and knowledge, and liberty, and goodness, and you divest him of his glory; you take away his most essential perfections. So that these great absurdities following from the supposing of God to be mere matter or body, we are to conceive of him as another kind of substance, that is, a spirit. So that I wonder that the author of the Leviathan, who doth more than once expressly affirm, that there can be nothing in the world but what is material and corporal, did not see that the necessary consequence of this position, is to banish God out of the world. I would not be uncharitable, but I doubt he did see it, and was content with the consequence, and willing the world should entertain it: for it is so evident, that by supposing the divine essence to consist of matter, the immensity of the divine nature is taken away; and it is also so utterly unimaginable how mere matter should understand, and be endowed with liberty, and consequently with goodness, that I cannot but vehemently suspect the man who denies God to be a spirit, either to have a gross and faulty understanding, or a very ill will against God, and an evil design to root out of the minds of men the belief of a God. I come in the

III. Place, to consider the objections.

1. *Obj.* Why then is God represented to us so often in scripture by the parts and members of mens bodies? *Anf.* I shall only say at present, that all these descriptions and representations of God are plainly made to comply with our weakness, by way of condescension and accommodation to our capacities.

2. *Obj.* How is it said, that *man was made after the image of God*, if God be a spirit, of which there can be no likeness nor resemblance? *Anf.* Man is not said to be *made after the image of God*, in respect of the outward shape and features of his body, but in respect of the qualities of his mind, as holiness and righteousness; or of his faculties, as understanding and will; or, which the text seems most to favour, in respect of his dominion and sovereignty over the creatures; for in the two former respects, the angels are made after the image of God. Now this seems to be spoken peculiarly of men, Gen. i. 26. *Let us make man in our own image, after our*

own

wn likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of he sea, and the fowls of the air. &c.

IV. I come now to draw some inferences or corollaries from hence, and they shall be partly speculative, rtly practical.

First, Speculative inferences.

1. That God is invisible. The proper object of sight colour, and that ariseth from the various disposition f the parts of matter which cause several reflections light. Now, a spirit hath no parts nor matter, and herefore is invisible. 1 Tim. i. 17. *Unto the eternal, mmortal, invisible, the only wise God.* Heb. xi. 27. *He ndured, as seeing him who is invisible:* as seeing him y an eye of faith, who is invisible by an eye of sense. Tim. vi. 16. *Whom no man hath seen, nor can see.*

When Moses and the elders of Israel are said to have en God, and Jacob to have seen him face to face, Exod. . 9. Gen. xxxii. 30. it is meant of an angel covered vith divine glory and majesty; as we shall see if we ompare these with other texts. When Moses is said o have spoken to him face to face, that is, familiarly; nd so Micaiah, 1 Kings xxii. 19. is said to have *seen God upon his throne, and all Israel scattered up and down:* his was in a vision. And it is promised, that in heaven ve shall see God, that is, have a more perfect knowedge of him, and full enjoyment; as to see good days, to enjoy them. Those texts, where it is said, *No man an see God and live*, Exod. xxxiii. 20. and John i. 18. *No man hath seen God at any time*, do not intimate that God is visible, though we cannot see him; but seeing is metaphorically used for knowing, and the meaning is, hat in this life we are not capable of a perfect knowedge of God. A clear discovery of God to our understanding would let in joys into our souls, and create desires in us too great for frail mortality to bear.

2. That he is the living God; spirit and life are often put together in scripture.

3. That God is immortal. This the scripture attributes to him, 1 Tim. i. 17. *To the king immortal, invisible.* 1 Tim. vi. 16. *Who only hath immortality.* This also flows from God's spirituality; a spiritual nature hath no principles of corruption in it, nothing that is

liable to perish, or decay, or die. Now, this doth
minently agree to God, either because he is purely
ritual and immaterial, as possibly no creature is;
else because he is not only immortal in his own nat
but is not liable to be reduced to nothing by any ot
because he hath an original and independent immor
lity; and therefore the Apostle doth attribute it
him in such a singular and peculiar manner, who o
hath immortality.

Secondly, Practical inferences.

1. We are not to conceive of God as having a bo
or any corporal shape or members. This was the gr
conceit of the Anthropomorphites of old, and of fo
Socinians of late, which they ground upon the gross a
literal interpretation of many figurative speeches
scripture concerning God, as where it speaks of his fac
and hand, and arm, &c. But we are very unthankf
to God, who condescends to represent himself to us a
cording to our capacities, if we abuse this condescen
on to the blemish and reproach of the divine natur
If God be pleased to stoop to our weakness, we mu
not therefore level him to our infirmities.

2. If God be a spirit, we are not to worship God by a
ny image or sensible representation. Because God is
spirit, we are not to liken him to any thing that is cor
poral; we are not to represent him by the likeness of a
ny thing that is in heaven above, that is, of any birds
or in the earth beneath, that is, of any beast; or in th
waters under the earth, that is, of any fish; as it is in
the second commandment. For, as the Prophet tells us
there is nothing that we can liken God to; Isa. xl. 18
*To whom will you liken God? or what likeness will ye com-
pare to him?* We debase his spiritual and incorruptible
nature, when we compare him to corruptible creatures.
Rom. i. 22, 23. speaking of the Heathen idolatry,
*Who professing themselves wise, became fools, and changed
the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like
to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts,
and creeping things.* They became fools; this is the folly
of idolatry, to liken a spirit, which hath no bodily shape,
to things that are corporal and corruptible. So that
however some are pleased to mince the matter, I cannot
see

e how the church of Rome, which worships God by
towards some image or sensible representation, can be
cused from idolatry; and the church of England doth
t without very just cause challenge the Romish church
ith it, and make it a ground of separation from her.

3. If God be a spirit, then we should worship him in
irit and in truth. This is the inference of the text, and
erefore I shall speak a little more largely of it; only
must explain what is meant by worshipping in spirit
d in truth, and shew you the force of this consequence,
ow it follows, that because God is a Spirit, therefore
e must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

1*st*, For the explication of it. This word *spirit* is
metimes applied to the doctrine of the gospel, and so
is opposed to *letter*, by which name the doctrine of
loses is called, 2 Cor. iii. 6. *Who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit*; not of the law, which was written in tables of
one, but which Christ by his spirit writes in the hearts
f believers. Sometimes to the worship of the gospel;
nd so it is opposed to the flesh, Gal. iii. 3. *Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*
hat is, by the works of the ceremonial law, which is
herefore called flesh, because the principal ceremony
f it, circumcision, was made in the flesh, and because
heir sacrifices, a chief part of their worship, were of
he flesh of beasts, and because the greatest part of their
rdinances, as washing, and the like, related to the bo-
y. Hence it is the Apostle calls the worship of the Jews,
he law of a carnal commandment, Heb. vii. 16. and
Heb. ix. 10. *Carnal ordinances*, speaking of the service
f the law, which, saith he, stood in meats, and drinks,
nd divers washings and carnal ordinances. Now, in
pposition to this carnal and ceremonial worship, we
re to worship God in spirit. The worship of the Jews
vas most abodily service; but we are to give God a rea-
onable service, to serve him with the spirit of our
minds, as the Apostle speaks; instead of offering the
lesh of bulls and goats, we are to consecrate ourselves
o the service of God: this is a holy and acceptable
acrifice, or reasonable service.

And

And in truth. Either in opposition to the false ship of the Samaritans, (as *in spirit* is opposed to worship of the Jews) as our Saviour tells the wom that they worshipped they knew not what; or, w I rather think, in opposition to the shadows of the l and so it is opposed, John i. 17. *The law was give Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

Not that the external service of God is here exc ed, not that we are to shew no outward reverence him; but that as under the law, the service of G was chiefly external and corporeal, so now it sho chiefly be inward and spiritual: the worship of G under the gospel, should chiefly be spiritual and subst tial, not a carnal, and bodily, and ceremonious devoti

2*dly*, For the force of the consequence, it doth not in this, that just such as God is, such must our wors of him be; for this would exclude all bodily and ou ward worship; our worship of God must therefore invisible, eternal, *&c.* for so is he; and besides, the w of God seems rather to be the rule of his worship th his nature: but the force of it is this; God is of a spi tual nature, and this is to be supposed to be his will, th our worship should be as agreeable to the object of i as the nature of the creature, who is to give it, will bea Now, saith Christ to the woman, the Jews and the S maritans limit their worship to a certain place, and it con sists chiefly in certain carnal rites and ordinances; bu saith he, though God have permitted this for a time, be cause of the carnality and hardness of their hearts, ye the time is coming, when a more spiritual, and solid, an substantial worship of God is to be introduced, which wi be free from all particular places and rites; not tied t the temple, or to such external ceremonies, but con sisting in the devotion of our spirits, even the inward frame and temper of our hearts; all outward circum stances, excepting those of the two sacraments which are positive, being left by the gospel to as great a li berty, as natural necessity and decency will permit.

We must worship God; and therefore it is naturally necessary, that we should do it somewhere, in some place: now seeing some-body must determine this, it is most convenient that authority should determine it ac-

cording

eding to the conveniency of cohabitation. We must n be rude, nor do any thing that is naturally undec ct in the worship of God; this authority should re- strain; but farther than this, I doubt not but the go- spel hath left us free; and to this end, that the less we a tied to external observances, the more intent we sould be upon the spiritual and substantial parts of re- ligion, the conforming of ourselves to the mind and wl of God, endeavouring to be like unto God, and to h e our souls and spirits engaged in those duties we p form to him. So that our Saviour's argument is this; Gd is a Spirit, that is, the most excellent nature and b ng, and therefore must be served with the best. We c sist of body and soul, it is true, and we must serve h with our whole man, but principally with our s ds, which are the most excellent part of ourselves; t service of our mind and spirit is the best we can per- f m, and therefore most agreeable to God, who is a s irit, and the best and most perfect being.

So that the inference is this, that if *God be a spirit, w must worship him in spirit and in truth;* our religion n st be real, and inward, and sincere, and substantial: w must not think to put off God with external obser- v nces, and with bodily reverence and attendance; this w must give him, but we must principally regard that o service of him be reasonable, that is, directed by o understanding, and accompanied with our affecti- o. Our religion must consist principally in a sincere l e and affection to God, which expresseth itself in a r l conformity of our lives and actions to his will; and w en we make our solemn approaches to him, in the d ies of his worship and service, we must perform all a s of outward worship to God with a pure and sincere m d: whatever we do in the service of God, we must *d it heartily as to the Lord.* God is a pure spirit, pre- s t to our spirits, intimate to our souls, and conscious t the most secret and retired motions of our hearts: n w because we serve the searcher of hearts, we must s ve him with our hearts.

Indeed if we did worship God only to be seen of men, a pompous and external worship would be very suitable t such an end; but religion is not intended to please men,

men, but God, and therefore it must be spiritua
inward, and real.

And where ever the external part of religion i
cipally regarded, and men are more careful to w
God with outward pomp and ceremony, than *in*
and in truth, religion degenerates into superstitio
men embrace the shadow of religion, and let go th
stance. And this the church of Rome hath don
most to the utter ruin of Christianity: she hath cl
religion and the worship of God, with so many
and ceremonies, under one pretence or other, tha
yoke of Christ is become heavier than *that of A*
and they have made the gospel a more carnal
mandment than the law; and whatever Christia
churches are intent upon external rites and observa
to the neglect of the weightier parts of religion, re
ing *meats and drinks*, &c. to the prejudice of *righ*
ness and peace, wherein *the kingdom of God* consists,
advance a religion as contrary to the nature of
and as unsuitable to the genius and temper of the
pel, as can be imagined.

It is an observation of Sir Edwin Sands, that as c
ren are pleased with toys, so, saith he, it is a pitiful
childish spirit that is predominant in the contrivers
zealots of a ceremonious religion. I deny not, but
very honest and devout men may be this way addic
but the wiser any man is, the better he understand
nature of God and of religion, the farther he wil
from this temper.

A religion, that consists in external and little thi
doth most easily gain upon and possesses the wea
minds; and whoever entertain it, it will enfeeble t
spirits, and unfit them for the more generous and excel
duties of Christianity. We have but a finite heat,
zeal, and activity; and if we let out much of it u
small things, there will be too little left for those p
of religion which are of greatest moment and conce
ment: if our heat evaporate in externals, the he
and vitals of religion will insensibly cool and declin

How should we blush, who are Christians, that
have not learnt this easy truth from the gospel, wh
even the light of nature taught the Heathen? *Cultus*

t

deorum est optimus itemque sanctissimus atque castissi-
plenissimnsque pietatis, ut eos semper pura, integra &
rrupta mente & voce veneremur, Tully. "The best,
"he surest, the most chaste, and most devout worship
"f the Gods, is that which is paid them with a pure,
"ncere, and uncorrupt mind, and words truly repre-
"enting the thoughts of the heart." *Compositum jus*
ue animi, &c. "Serve God with a pure, honest,
"oly frame of spirit; bring a heart that is but gene-
"ously honest, and he will accept of the plainest sacri-
"ce."

And let me tell you, that the ceremonious worship
o he Jews was never a thing in itself acceptable to
G d, or which he did delight in; and though God was
p ased with their obedience to the ceremonial law af-
t it was commanded, yet antecedently he did not de-
si it; but that which our Saviour saith concerning the
l of divorce, is true likewise of the ceremonial, that
i was permitted to the *Jews for the hardness of their*
h rts, and for their proneness to idolatry. God did not
c nmand it so much by way of approbation, as by
v y of condescension to their weakness; it was because
c *the hardness of their carnal hearts*, that God brought
t m under *the law of a carnal commandment*, as the A-
p stle calls it. See Psal. li. 16, 17. Jer. vii. 21.

The reason why I have insisted so long upon this, is,
t let you understand what is the true nature of Christ's
i igion, and to abate the intemperate heat and zeal
i ich men are apt to have for external indifferent things
i religion. The sacrifices and rites of the Jews were
ry unagreeable and unsuitable to the nature of God.
al. l. 13. *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood*
goats? Spirits neither eat nor drink; it was a very
suitable way of service to kill oxen and sheep for
od; and there is the same reason for all other rites,
hich either natural necessity or decency doth not re-
uire. Can any man in earnest think, that God, who
a spirit, is pleased with the pompous bravery and
geantry which affects our senses? So little doth God
alue indifferent rites, that even the necessary external
rvice of God, and outward reverence, where they are
parated from *spirit and truth*, from real holiness and
obedi-

obedience to the indispensible laws of Christ, are so from being acceptable to God, that they are abominable; nay, if they be used for a cloak of sin, or in opposition to real religion, and with a design to undermine it, God accounts such service in the number of the most heinous sins.

You, who spend the strength and vigour of your spirits about external things, whose zeal for or against ceremonies is ready *to eat you up*; you who hate and persecute one another because of these things, and break the necessary and indispensible commands of love, for an indifferent and unnecessary ceremony, *go and learn what that means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*, which our Saviour doth so often inculcate; and that, Rom. xiv. 17. *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink*, &c. And study the meaning of this, *God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.*

SERMON CLIV.

The Immensity of the divine nature.

PSAL. CXXXIX. 7, 8, 9, 10.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

THat attribute of God which I last discoursed of is most absolute, and declares his essence most immediately; the spirituality of the divine nature. I shall in the next place speak of those which relate to the manner of his being, immensity and eternity; that is, the infiniteness of his essence, both in respect of space and duration; that the divine nature hath no limits of its being, nor bounds of its duration. I shall

the

he present speak to the first of these, his immensity, nd that from these words which I here read to you, *Whither shall I go from thy spirit*, &c. The meaning of which is this, that God is a spirit infinitely diffusing imself, present in all places, so that where-ever I go, God is there; we cannot flee from his presence. *If I ascend into heaven, he is there; if I go down into the grave,* he place of silence and obscurity, *he is there;* (for that s the meaning of the expression) *if I make my bed in hell; f I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, nd thy right hand shall hold me;* that is, if my motion hould be as swift as that of the light, which, when the sun riseth, darts itself in an instant from one part of the world to another, over the earth and the sea, the remotest parts of the world, which are unknown to us, yet would God be present to me in the motion, and all along as I go must I be led and upholden by him; so that all these expressions do but signify to us the immensity of God's essence, that his being is infinitely diffused and present in all places.

In speaking to this attribute of God's immensity, I shall,

1. Explain it to you a little.
2. Prove that it doth belong to him.
3. Answer an objection or two that may be made against it.
4. Draw some doctrinal inferences from it.
5. Make some use and improvement of it.

First, For the explication of it. By the immensity of God, I mean, that his being hath no bounds or limits, but doth every way spread and diffuse itself beyond what we can imagine; so that you cannot define the presence of God by any certain place; so as to say, here he is, but not there; nor by any limits, so as to say, thus far his being reacheth, and no farther; but he is every where present after a most infinite manner, in the darkest corners and most private recesses; the most secret closet that is in the whole world, the heart of man, darkness and privacy cannot keep him out; the presence of another being, even of a body, which is the grossest substance, doth not exclude him; the whole

world doth not confine him; but he fills all the [illegible] which we can imagine beyond this visible world, [illegible] infinitely more than we can imagine.

Secondly, For the proof of it, I shall attempt it

1. From the natural notions and dictates of our mi[illegible]
2. From scripture and divine revelation.
3. From the inconvenience of the contrary.

I. From the natural notions and dictates of our mi[illegible]. We find that the Heathen, by the light of nature, attribute this perfection to God. Tully tells us, *Nat. Deor.* that Pythagoras thought, *Deum esse an[illegible] per naturam rerum omnem intentum & commeant[illegible]* "That God is, as it were, a soul passing through a "inspiring all nature." And in *l.* 2. *de leg.* that t[illegible] was Thales his opinion which he commends, *Homi[illegible] existimare oportere deos omnia cernere, deorum omnia [illegible] plena.* "That men ought to believe, that the Gods "all things, that all things are full of them." So Se[illegible] Epist. 95. *Ubique & omnibus præsto est.* "He is eve[illegible] "where present, and at hand;" & *de Benef. l.* *Quocunque te flexeris ibi illum videbis occurrentem til[illegible] nihil ab illo vacat, opus suum ipse implet.* "Whi[illegible] "way soever thou turnest thyself, thou shalt find hi[illegible] "meeting thee; nothing is without him, he fills h[illegible] "own work." Not much differing from the expre[illegible] sion of the Psalmist here.

II. From scripture and divine revelation. I shall in[illegible] stance in some remarkable places; 1 Kings viii. 27. *Be[illegible] hold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contai[illegible] thee.* Job xi. 7, 8, 9. *Canst thou by searching find ou[illegible] God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection:* Isa. lxvi. 1. *Thus saith the Lord, behold, heaven is m[illegible] throne, and the earth is my footstool; where is the hous[illegible] that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest:* Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. *Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret[illegible] places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?* Amos ix. 2, 3. *Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence: and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea,*

thence

ince will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them. Acts xvii. 27, 28. *Though he be not far from every one ous. For in him we live, and move, and have our be- ; as certain also of your own poets have said, for we a also his offspring.*

III. From the inconveniencies of the contrary. And t is is the most proper way of proving any of God's per- fections; for, as I have told you formerly, there being nothing before God, nor any cause of his being, his per- fections cannot be proved by way of demonstration, but conviction, by shewing the absurdity of the contrary. he first and most easy notion that we have of God, is, at he is a being that hath all perfection, and is free om all imperfections. Now if I prove that the im- ensity of God's essence is a perfection, or, which is e same, that the contrary is an imperfection, I do suf- iently prove the thing intended.

Now, to suppose the divine essence to be limited, or nfined, and his presence to be any where excluded, th contradict both this necessary perfection of God, s universal providence; and the necessary duty of eatures, to worship and trust in him; and the volun- ry manifestation and appearance of God in the incar- ation of Jesus Christ.

1. It contradicts the universal providence of God. he universal providence of God supposeth many per- ctions, viz. infinite knowledge, and infinite power, s omniscience and omnipotence, neither of which can imagined without omnipresence. We find that all fi- te beings have a finite knowledge, and a finite pow- ; and it cannot be conceived how infinite understan- ng and power can be founded any where else, than an infinite essence. To have an infinite knowledge f all things, even those things which are most secret nd hidden, to be able to do all things, to steer and overn the actions of all creatures, and to have a erfect care of them seems, to all the reason of man- ind, to require immediate presence.

2. It contradicts the necessary duty of the creature, hich is to worship God, to depend upon him for e- ery thing, and in every thing to acknowledge him. Now all worship of God is rendered vain, or at least

uncertain, if God be not present to us to hear our pr
ers, to take notice of our wants, and receive our
knowledgments: it will much abate our confidenc
God, and our fear to offend him, if we be uncert
whether he be present to us or not, whether he
our actions or not.

3. It contradicts a voluntary manifestation and appe
ance of God in the incarnation of Christ. He that
poseth God not to be every where present by his essen
must in all reason confine his presence to heaven,
suppose him to be present elsewhere only by his vir
and power: but if this were so, how could the divin
be essentially united to the human nature of Chr
which was here upon the earth? how *is God with u*
How does *he pitch his tabernacle amongst men*, if his
sential presence be confined to heaven?

Thirdly, I come to answer objections against this d
ctrine.

There are two objections against this.

1. From reason.

2. From scripture.

1. *Obj.* Reason will be ready to suggest, that this is
disparagement to the divine nature, to tie his presen
to this vile dunghil of the earth, and sordid sink of he
This is a gross apprehension of God, and a measurin
of him by ourselves. Indeed if we look upon God
capable of injury, and suffering, and offence from th
contagion of any thing here below, as we are, the
indeed there were some strength in this objection: bu
he is a blessed and pure being; *Mens segregata ab om
concretione mortali.* "A mind free from all mortal con
"position or mixture. Tully." Μηδενὶ παθητῷ συμπ
πλεγμένον, "disentangled from every thing passible," a
Plut. Those things that are nauseous to our senses, d
not affect him. Darkness is uncomfortable to us; bu
the darkness and the light are all one to him. Wickednes
may *hurt a man, or the son of man; but if we multiply ou
transgressions, we do nothing to God*, as Elihu speaks, Jol
xxxv. 6. Nothing can disquiet or discompose his happy
and blessed nature, but he converseth here in this dark
and troubled world with less danger or disturbance, o
any impure contagion, than the sun-beams.

II *Obj.*

II. *Obj.* Does not the scripture tell us, that *God sits the heavens, and dwells on high; that heaven is his throne,* and that *it is the city of the great God?* Doth not the Lord's prayer teach us to say, *Our Father which art in heaven?* Is he not said to *look down from heaven, and to hear in heaven, his dwelling-place?* Is it not said, *that he doth not dwell in temples made with hands?* And does not Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 27. put it as a strange question, *will God indeed dwell on the earth?* is he not said to *come down and draw near* to us, and to be *afar off from us?* Now how does this agree with immensity and omnipresence?

For answer to this, I must distinguish the presence of God. There is,

1. His glorious presence, that is, such a presence of God as is accompanied with an extraordinary manifestation of his glory, and that is especially and chiefly confined to heaven, in respect of which it is called his seat, and throne, and *the habitation of his glory.* Some degree of this was in the temple, which is the reason of Solomon's admiration, *Will God indeed dwell on earth?*

2. There is his gracious presence, which discovers itself by miraculous effects of his favour and goodness, and assistance, and thereby he is said *to dwell in the hearts* of good men, and *with them that are of an humble and contrite spirit,* Isa. lvii. 15. and, in respect of this, he is said to *draw near to us, to look down upon us;* and in respect of the absence of this, to *be far from us.*

3. There is his essential presence, which is equally and alike in all places; and this is not excluded by those former expressions, which the scripture useth to denote to us the glorious and gracious presence of God.

Fourthly, To make some inferences. I will mention only such as the scripture here takes notice of, speaking of God's immensity.

1. *Inf.* That God is a spirit. This necessarily flows from his immensity; for if the essence of God be everywhere diffused, the divine nature must be spiritual, otherwise it could not be in the same place where body and matter is, but must be shut out of the world. But this I spoke more largely to, in my discourse of God's being a spirit. This the Psalmist observes here, *Where*

shall I go from thy spirit? If he were not a spirit, we might *go from him, and hide ourselves from his presence.*

2. *Inf.* That God is incomprehensible. That which is infinite cannot be measured and comprehended by that which is finite; and this also the Psalmist takes notice of, in the verse before my text, *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain it.*

3. *Inf.* That God is omniscient. If God be everywhere, then he knows all things, yea, even the hidden things of darkness, the secrets of our hearts; nothing can be hidden from an infinite eye; he is present to our thoughts, intimate to our hearts and reins: this the Psalmist takes notice of, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 12th verses.

4. *Inf.* That God is omnipotent. *He can do all things.* Distance limits the power of creatures, and makes *their hands short:* but God is every where, nothing is out of his reach; and this also the Psalmist intimates in the text, ver. 10. *Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand hold me.*

Fifthly, The use and improvement I shall make of this, shall be,

1. To awaken our fear of him.

2. To encourage our faith and confidence in him.

I. To awaken our fear of him. The consideration of God's presence should awaken in us a fear of reverence. The presence of an earthly majesty will awe our spirits, and compose us to reverence; yea, the presence of a wise and good man; how much more should the presence of the great, glorious, the wise, and the holy, and the just God, strike an awe upon our spirits? Wherever we are, God is with us; we always converse with him, and live continually in his presence. Now, a Heathen could say, *Cum diis verecundè agendum,* "We "must behave ourselves modestly, because we are in "the presence of God."

And it should awaken in us a fear to offend God, and a fear of the divine displeasure for having offended him. Fear is the most wakeful passion in the soul of man, and is the first principle that is wrought upon in us from the apprehensions of a deity; it flows immediately from the principle of self-preservation which God hath planted in every man's nature: we have a natural dread and horror

r for every thing that can hurt us, and endanger our
ng or happiness. Now, the greatest danger is from
e greatest power; for where we are clearly overmatch-
, we cannot hope to make opposition nor resistance
th security and success, to rebel with safety: now, he
at apprehends God to be near him, and present to
m, believes such a being to stand by him as is possessed
an infinite and irresistible power, and will vindicate
contempt of the divine Majesty, and violation of his
ws. If we believe God to be always present with us,
ur will continually take hold of us, and we shall say of
ery place, as Jacob did of Bethel, *surely God is in this*
lace, how dreadful is this place! when we have at any
me provoked God, if we believe the just God is at
and to revenge himself, and if we believe *the power of*
is anger, we shall say with David, Psal. lxxvi. 7. *Thou,*
ven thou, art to be feared, and who may stand before thee
when thou art angry? Psal. cxix. 120. *My flesh trem-*
bleth because of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.
Sinners, consider this, *it is a fearful thing to fall into*
he hands of the living God; and every time you sin,
ou are within his reach. Let then the consideration of
God's presence deter us from sin, and quicken us to
our duty. The eye and presence of a superior will lay
a great restraint upon men; the eye of our prince, our
master, or our father, will make us afraid or ashamed
to do any thing that is foolish or unseemly: and will we
do that under the eye of God, which we should blush
to do before a grave or wise person, yea, before a child
or a fool? Did but men live under this apprehension,
that God is present to them, that an holy and all-see-
ing eye beholds them, they would be afraid to do any
thing that is vile and wicked, to profane and pollute
God's glorious name, by a trifling use of it in custo-
mary swearing and cursing. Whenever you sin, you af-
front God to his face, and provoke omnipotent justice,
which is at the door, and ready to break in upon you.

And the consideration of this should especially deter
us from secret sins. This is the use the Psalmist here
makes of it. If we believe that God *searcheth us, and*
knows us, that he knows our down-sitting, and our up-rising,
and understands our thoughts afar off; that he compasseth

our

our path, and our lying down, and is acquainted w our ways; that there is not a word in our tongu he knows it altogether; that he hath beset us behin before; that the darkness hideth not from him, bu night shineth as the day, and the darkness and ligh both alike: I say, if we believe this, how should w in an awful sense of the majesty which is always a us, and before us, and about us, and within us, and inseparable from us, as we are from ourselves, whos is upon us from the begginning of our lives to the en our days! Did men believe that God is always with th that his eye pierceth the darkness, and sees through those clouds with which they hide and muffle themsel and pries into the most secret recesses of their hear how would this check and restrain them from devi mischief in their hearts, or in their bed-chamber! holy presence, and the pure eye of God would be to a thousand times more than to have our father, or master, or our prince, or him whom we most revere, stand by us. Did but men *repræsentare sibi Deu* "make God present to them," by living under a co tinual sense of his presence, they would, as the expressi of the wise man is, *be in the fear of the Lord all da Magna spes peccatorum tollitur, si peccaturis testis adsist aliquem habeat animus quem vereatur, cujus auctoritate e iam secretum suum sanctius facit;* "The main hope "sinners is to remain undiscovered; let but some-bod "be privy to their designs, and they are utterly disap "pointed: it is fit for the mind of a man to have a "awe of some being, whose authority may render even "its privacy more solemn." This is the character o wicked men, Psal. lxxxvi. 14. *That they have not God before their eyes.* One great cause of all the wickedness and violence, and looseness that is upon the earth, is they do not believe that God is near them, and stands by them.

And as the consideration of God's presence should deter us from sin, so it should quicken and animate us to our duty. It is ordinarily a great encouragement to men to acquit themselves handsomely, to have the eyes of men upon them, especially of those whose applause and approbation they value. God alone is *amplum theatrum,*

he

his "a greater theatre" than the world; and it should be more to us that he stands by us, than if the eyes of all the world were fixed upon us. Seneca adviseth it as an excellent means to promote virtue, to propound to ourselves, and set before our eyes some eminently virtuous person, as Cato or Lælius, *Ut sic tanquam illo spectante vivamus, & omnia tanquam illo vidente faciamus*; "That we may live just as if he were looking upon us, and do all things just as if he beheld us." How much greater incitement will it be to us, to think that God looks upon us, and sees us, and really stands by us, than faintly to imagine the presence of Lælius or Cato? This should have an influence upon all the duties we perform, and the manner of performing them, that we do it to him who stands by us, and is familiarly acquainted with us, and is more intimate to us than we are to ourselves. This Cic. in *l.* 2. *de leg.* looks upon as a great principle of religion, *Sit igitur hoc persuasum civibus, & qualis quisque sit, quid agat, quid in se admittat, qua mente, qua pietate religiones colat, deos intueri, piorum impiorumque rationem habere:* "Let men be thoroughly perswaded of this, that the Gods observe both the disposition and the actions of every particular man, what he consents to, what he allows himself in, particularly with what meaning, with what degree of inward devotion he performs his religious worship; and that they distinguish between the pious and the impious."

II. To encourage our faith and confidence in him. When we are in straits, and difficulties and dangers, God is with us; when trouble is near to us, God is not far from us; where-ever we are, how remote soever from friends and companions, we cannot be banished from God's presence; if we dwell *beyond the outmost parts of the sea, there his hand leads us, and his right hand holds us.* Psal. xvi. 8. *I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.* The consideration of God's presence is the great stay and support of our faith. Psal. xlvi. 1, 2. *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble; therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst*

midſt of the ſea. In the greateſt commotions, at t moſt imminent and threatening dangers, this ſ charm and allay our fears, that *God is a preſent h*

This was the ſupport of Moſes his faith in his ſi ings, as the Apoſtle tells us, Heb. xi. 27. *He endu as ſeeing him who is inviſible.*

To conclude all, whenever we are under any pre or trouble, we ſhould rebuke our own fears, and c lenge our anxious thoughts with David, Pſal. xlii. *Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul, and why art th diſquieted within me? Truſt ſtill in God;* believe t God is with thee, and that omnipotent goodneſs ſta by thee, who can and will ſupport thee, and reli thee, and deliver thee when it ſeems beſt to his wiſd

SERMON CLV.

The eternity of God.

PSAL. XC. 2.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever th hadſt formed the earth and the world, even from eve laſting to everlaſting thou art God.

THE immenſity and eternity of God are thoſ attributes which relate to his nature, or man ner of being. Having ſpoken of the former, I proceed to conſider the latter, from theſe words.

The title of this pſalm is, *The prayer of Moſes, the man of God.* He begins his prayer with the acknowledgment of God's providence to his people from the beginning of the world; *Lord, thou haſt been our dwelling-place from all generations; in generation and generation;* ſo the Hebrew. He was well acquainted with the hiſtory of the world, and the providence of God from the beginning of it; and as if he had ſpoken too little of God, in ſaying, that his providence had been exerciſed in all the ages of the world, he tells us here in the text, that he was before the world, and he made it; he was from

m all eternity, and should continue to all eternity
same. *Before the mountains were brought forth,* the
ost firm and durable parts of the world, the most
minent and conspicuous; *Or ever thou hadst form-*
the earth and the world; before any thing was cre-
ed; *from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.* In
eaking of this attribute, I shall,

1. Give you the explication of it.
2. Endeavour to prove that it doth belong to God,
d ought to be attributed to the divine nature.
3. Draw some corollaries from the whole.

First, For the explication of it. Eternity is a dura-
on, without bounds or limits: now, there are two li-
its of duration, *beginning and ending;* that which
th always been, is without beginning; that which
ways shall be, is without ending. Now, we may
nceive of a thing always to have been, and the con-
nuance of its being now to cease, though there be no
ch thing in the world: and there are some things
hich have had a beginning of their being, but shall have
end, shall always continue, as the angels and spi-
ts of men. The first of these the schoolmen call eter-
ty *à parte ante,* that is, "duration without be-
ginning;" this latter, eternity *à parte post,* "a du-
ration without ending." But eternity, absolutely ta-
en, comprehends both these, and signifies "an infinite
duration, which had no beginning, nor shall have any
end;" so that when we say God is eternal, we mean
hat he always was, and shall be for ever; that he had
o beginning of life, nor shall have any end of days;
ut that *he is from everlasting to everlasting,* as it is
ere in the text.

It is true indeed, that as to God's eternity, *à parte*
nte, as to his having always been, the scripture doth
ot give us any solicitous account of it; it only tells us
general, that God was before the world was, and that
e created it: it doth not descend to gratify our curi-
sity, in giving us any account of what God did before
e made the world, or how he entertained himself from
ll eternity: it doth not give us any distinct account of
is infinite duration; for that had been impossible for
ur finite understandings to comprehend; if we should
have

have aſcended upward millions of ages, yet we ſh never have aſcended to the top, never have arrive the beginning of infinity; therefore the ſcripture, w was wrote to inſtruct us in what was neceſſary, an to ſatisfy our curioſity, tells us this, that God from everlaſting, before the world was made, and he laid the foundation of it.

So that by the eternity of God, you are to un ſtand the perpetual continuance of his being, witl beginning or ending.

I ſhall not trouble you with the inconſiſtent and intelligible notions of the ſchoolmen; that it is *du tota ſimul*, in which we are not to conceive any ſuc ſion, but to imagine it an inſtant: we may as well c ceive the immenſity of God to be a point, as his e nity to be an inſtant: and as, according to our man of conceiving, we muſt neceſſarily ſuppoſe the imm ſity of God to be an infinite expanſion of his eſſence preſence of it to all places, and imaginable ſpace; muſt we ſuppoſe the eternity of God to be a perpet continuance, co-exiſtent to all imaginable ſucceſſion ages. Now, how can that be together, which muſt n ceſſarily be imagined to be co-exiſtent to ſucceſſio let them, that can, conceive.

2*dly*, For the proof of this, I ſhall attempt it two wa

1. From the dictates of natural light and reaſon.

2. From the ſcripture and divine revelation.

1. From the dictates of natural reaſon. This att bute of God is, of all other, leaſt diſputed among t philoſophers: indeed all agree that God is a perfect a happy being; but wherein that happineſs and perfect on conſiſts, they differ exceedingly; but all agree, th God is eternal, and are agreed what eternity is, *viz.* boundleſs duration: and however they did attribute beginning to their heroes and demons, whence com the genealogies of their Gods, yet the ſupreme God the looked upon as without beginning: and it is a good evi dence, that this perfection doth clearly belong to God that Epicurus, who had the loweſt and meaneſt conce ptions of God, and robbed him of as many perfection as his imperfect reaſon would let him, yet is forced t attribute this to him. *Tull. de. Nat. Deor. lib.* 1. ſait

to

the Epicureans, *Ubi igitur vestrum beatum & æternum, quibus duobus verbis significatis Deum?* "Where then is your happy and eternal being, by which two epithets you express God? And Lucretius, who hath undertaken to represent to the world the doctrine of Epicurus, gives this account of the divine nature.

Omnis enim per se divum natura necesse est
Immortali ævo summa cum pace fruatur.

It is absolutely necessary to the nature of the Gods, "to pass an eternity in profound peace and quiet." The poets, who had the wildest notions of God, yet they constantly give them the title of ἀθάνατοι; the Heathen never mention the name of God without this attribute, *Dii immortales!* immortal Gods! was their ordinary exclamation; and they swear constantly by this attribute, *deos testor immortales;* and to mention no more, Tully saith expressly, *Nos Deum nisi sempiternum intelligere qui possumus?*" "How can we conceive of God, but as an eternal being."

Now, the reason of this is evident, because it would be the greatest imperfection we could attribute to his being; and the more perfect his being were otherwise, the greater imperfection would it be for such a being to be; so excellent a nature to cease to be; it would be an infinite abasement to all his other perfections, his power, and wisdom, and goodness, that these should all be perishing; nay, it would hinder several of his perfections, and contradict their very being: his self-existence; had he not always been, he had not been of himself; his necessarly existence; for that is not necessarly, which may at any time not be, or cease to be what it is; and it would much abate the duty of the creature; we could not have that assurance of his promise, and that security of the recompence of the next life, if the continuance of his being, who should be the dispenser of them, were uncertain.

Now, these absurdities and inconveniencies following from the denial of this perfection to God, is sufficient evidence that it belongs to him; for I told you the perfections of God cannot be proved by way

of demonſtration, but only by way of conviction, b ſhewing the abſurdity of the contrary.

II. From ſcripture and divine revelation. There ar innumerable places to this purpoſe, which ſpeak of th eternity of God directly, and by conſequence: by con ſequence thoſe words, 2 *Pet.* iii. 8. *One day with th Lord is as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years as on day;* which words, however interpreters have trouble themſelves about them, being afraid of a contradictio in them, yet the plain meaning of them is this, that ſuc is the infinite duration of God, that all meaſures of tim bear no proportion to it; for that this is the plai meaning, appears by Pſal. xc. out of which they ar cited; *for a thouſand years in thy ſight are but as yeſter day, when it is paſt, and as a watch in the night;*" tha is, as the time paſt, as a few hours ſlept away, for tha is the meaning of a watch in the night, that is, a nothing. Now St. Peter's converſion of the words, on day is as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years a one day, only ſignifies this, that the longeſt duration o time is ſo inconſiderable to God, that it is as the ſhort eſt, that is, bears no proportion to the eternity of God

But directly, the ſcripture frequently mentions thi attribute: he is called the *Everlaſting God,* Gen. xxi 33. *The eternal God,* Deut. xxxiii. 27. and which i to the ſame purpoſe, *he that inhabiteth eternity,* Iſa. lvii 15. And this, as it is attributed to him in reſpect o his being, ſo in reſpect of all his other perfections, Pſal ciii. 17. *The mercy of the Lord is from everlaſting to e verlaſting.* Rom. i. 20. *his eternal power.* 1 Tim. i. 17. *the king eternal.* Thoſe doxologies which the ſcripture uſeth, are but acknowledgments of this attribute. *Bleſ ſed be the Lord for ever and ever,* Neh. ix. 5. *To whom be glory, and honour, and dominion for ever and ever,* Gal. i. 5. and in many other places.

Hither we may refer all thoſe places which ſpeak of him as without beginning; Pſal. xciii. 2. *Thou art from everlaſting.* Micah v. 2. *Whoſe goings forth have been from everlaſting.* Hab. i. 12. *Art not thou from ever laſting, O Lord?* and thoſe which ſpeak of the perpetual continuance of his duration, Pſal. cii. 24, 25, 26, 27. *Thy years are throughout all generations; of old thou haſt*

laid

id the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the ork of thy hands: they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; ea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, and as a esture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; ut thou art the same; and thy years shall have no end.

And those which speak of him as the first and the last. Isa. xliii. 10. *Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be any after me. I am the first, and I am he last, and besides me there is no God.* And, to mention no more, those which speak of his being, as coexistent to all difference of time, past, present, and to come, Rev. i. 8. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come.*

Thirdly, I shall from hence draw,

1. Some doctrinal corollaries.

2. Some practical inferences.

I. Doctrinal corollaries, that you may see how the perfections of God depend one upon another, and may be deduced one from another.

1. *Corol.* From the eternity of God, we may infer, that he is of himself. That which always is, can have nothing before it to be a cause of its being.

2. *Corol.* We may hence infer the necessity of his being. It is necessary every thing should be, when it is; now that which is always, is absolutely necessary, because always so.

3. *Corol.* The immutability of the divine nature; for being always, he is necessarily; and being necessarily, he cannot but be what he is; a change of his being, is as impossible as a cessation. Therefore the Psalmist puts his immutability and eternity together. Psal. cii. 27. *But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.*

II. By way of practical inference or application.

1. The consideration of God's eternity may serve for the support of our faith. This Moses here useth as a ground of his faith; *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations, before the mountains were brought forth*, &c. Psal. lxii. 8. *Trust in him at all times, ye people.* His immensity is an argument why all should trust in him, he is a present help to all; and why they should trust in him at all times, his eternity is an argu-

ment. Deut. xxxiii. 27. *The eternal God is thy refu and underneath are the everlasting arms.* There are t attributes which are the proper objects of our faith a confidence, God's goodness, and his power, both th are eternal: *The goodness of the Lord endureth for eve* as it is frequently in the Psalms; and his power is eternal: the Apostle speaks of his eternal power, as we as God-head, Rom. i. 20. Isa. xxvi. 4. *Trust ye in t Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlastin strength.* Isa. xl. 28. *The everlasting God, the Lord, t Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither weary.*

We cannot trust in men, because there is nothing i man to be a foundation of our confidence; his good-wil towards us may change, his power may faint, and h may grow weary; or if these continue, yet they tha have a mind and a power to help us, themselves may fail: therefore the Psalmist useth this consideration o mens mortality, to take us off from confidence in man, Psal. cxlvi. 3. 4. *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help; his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish.* Isa. ii. 22. *Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?* The greatest of the sons of men are but lying refuges to the everlasting God; they are but broken reeds to the rock of ages.

And this may support our faith, not only in reference to our own condition for the future, but in reference to our posterity, and the condition of God's church to the end of the world. When we die, we may leave ours and the church in his hands, who lives for ever, and reigns for ever. The enemies of God's church, and those who have the most malicious designs against it, whatever share they may have in the affairs of the world, they can but domineer for a while, they must die, *and that very day their thoughts perish: but thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.*

2 For the encouragement of our obedience. We serve the God who can give us an everlasting reward. The reward of the next life is called eternal life, an eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17. *Eternal salvation,* Heb. v. 9. *An eternal inheritance,* Heb. ix. 15. that place where

where good men shall be rewarded, is called *everlasting habitations*, Luke xvi. 9. *A house eternal in the heavens*, 2 Cor. v. 1. As the promise of our future reward is grounded in the goodness of God, and the greatness of it in his power, so the duration of it in his eternity. Now, what an encouragement is this to us, that we serve him, and suffer for him, who lives for ever, and will make us happy for ever? When we serve the great men of this world, though we be secure of their affection, yet we are uncertain of their lives; and this discourageth many, and makes men worship the rising sun, and many times takes off mens eyes from the king, to his successor; but he that serves God serves *the King everlasting*, as the Apostle calls him, who will live to dispense rewards to all those who are faithful to him.

3. For the terror of wicked men. The sentence which shall be past upon men at the day of judgment is called *Eternal judgment*, Heb. vi. 2. because it decides mens eternal state; the punishment that shall follow this sentence, which shall pass upon the wicked, is called *Everlasting punishment*, Matth. xxv. 36. *Everlasting fire*, Matth. xxv. 41. *Everlasting destruction*, 2 Thess. ii. 9. *The vengeance of eternal fire*, Jude 7. *The smoke* of the bottomless pit is said to *ascend for ever and ever*, Rev. xiv. 11. and the wicked to *be tormented day and night for ever and ever*, Rev. xx. 10. Now, as the punishment of wicked men is founded in the justice of God, and the greatness of it in his power, so the perpetuity and continuance of it in his eternity. The Apostle saith, Heb. x. 31. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*; because he that lives for ever can punish for ever; as the eternal demerit of sin feeds and animates, and keeps alive the never-dying worm, so the wrath of the eternal God blows up the eternal flame.

How should this awaken in us a fear of the eternal God! Sinners, what a folly is it, for the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, to incense that justice which will punish and torment you for ever! As good men shall have the everlasting God for their reward, and their happiness, so wicked men shall have him for their Judge and avenger.

We fear the wrath of men, whose power is short, a whose breath is in their nostirls, who can afflict but l shall, and for a little while. Dost thou fear man th and I die, and the son of man that shall be made as gras and is not the wrath of the eternal God much more te rible? Luke xii. 4, 5. *And I say unto you, my friends, not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that ha no more that they can do; but I will fore-warn you who ye shall fear; fear him, who after he hath killed, ha power to cast into hell, yea, I say unto you, fear him.* Th wrath of man is despicable, because it hath bounds an limits; the fury of man can but reach to the body, i can go no farther; it expires with this life, it canno follow us beyond the grave: but the wrath of the e ternal God doth not only reach the body, but the soul it is not confined to this life, but pursues us to the othe world, and extends itself to all eternity.

Fear him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cas into hell; that is, to inflict eternal torments; *yea, I say unto you, fear him.*

SERMON CLVI.

The incomprehensibleness of God.

JOB xi. 7.

Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

IN treating of the properties and perfections of God, I shall at present consider that which results from the infinite excellency of his nature and perfection, compared with the imperfection of our understandings, which is commonly called the incomprehensibleness of God. This you have expressed here in the words of Zophar, *Canst thou by searching find out God?* &c.

There is no great difficulty in the words; *Canst thou by searching find out God, potesne pervestigare intima Dei,*

so

ſc aſtalio tranſlates it. Doſt thou know God intimate-
l and thoroughly within and without? canſt thou
pce into the center of his perfections, and dive into
t bottom of them? and canſt thou find out the Al-
ghty to perfection? Canſt thou find out the Almighty,
ue ad ultima, to the very laſt and utmoſt of him? ſo
a thou canſt ſay, after a thorough ſearch and inquiry,
"There is no perfection in God beyond this; there is
"nothing of him now that remains to be known; this
"he is, and no other; that he is and no otherwiſe;
"this he can do, and no more; hither doth his know-
"ledge, and power, and wiſdom reach, and no far-
"ther."

Canſt thou do this? Theſe interrogations have the
rce of a vehement negation; as if he had ſaid, No,
ou canſt not; God is unſearchable, he is incompre-
nſible.

The two queſtions in the text ſeem to be only two
veral expreſſions of the ſame thing. The firſt queſti-
n is undoubtedly general, concerning the nature and
erfections of God in general; *Canſt thou by ſearching
nd out God?* Canſt thou by the moſt diligent ſearch and
nquiry come to a perfect knowledge and underſtanding
f him.

The ſecond queſtion may ſeem to be a particular in-
tance to the general truth implied in the firſt queſtion:
e ſeems to inſtance in his power, as if he had ſaid, God
s unſearchable, and then had inſtanced in a particular
perfection, the power of God, *Canſt thou by ſearching
find out God?* Thou canſt not comprehend the divine
nature and perfections in general; *Canſt thou find out
the Almighty unto perfection?* Conſider particularly his
power, and ſee if thou canſt know the utmoſt of that.
But I rather think that the latter queſtion is altogether
the ſame in ſenſe with the former; and that the attri-
bute of Almighty, which is here given to God, is uſed
by way of deſcription, and not intended by way of in-
ſtance. *Canſt thou find out the Almighty*, that is, God,
unto perfection? Which way ſoever we take the words,
it is not much material; we may ground this obſervati-
on upon them:

That God is incomprehenſible.

This

This term or attribute is a relative term, and ſp a relation between an object and a faculty, betw God and a created underſtanding; ſo that the mea of it is plainly this, that no created underſtanding comprehend God, that is, have a perfect and exact kn ledge of him, ſuch a knowledge as is adequate to perfection of the object: or thus, the nature and fections of God are above the underſtanding of any his creatures; it is only his own infinite underſta ing that can frame a perfect idea of his own perfecti God knows himſelf, his own underſtanding comp hends his own perfections. But he is *incompreheni to his creatures.*

Indeed, there is nothing more obvious than Go for *he is not far from every one of us; in him we li and move, and have our being;* there needs no gre ſearch to find out there is a God: *An eternal power a deity are clearly ſeen in the things which are made,* as t Apoſtle tells us; but the manner of the being, and pr perties, and perfections of this God, theſe cannot comprehended by a finite underſtanding. I ſhall prov the doctrine, and then apply it.

Firſt, For the proof of it: I will attempt it the three ways:

1. By way of inſtance, or induction of particulars.
2. By way of conviction.
3. By giving the clear reaſon of it.

1. By way of inſtance. And I ſhall give you inſtances both on the part of the object, and of the ſubject; or the perſons who are capable of knowing God in any degree.

1. On the part of the object. The nature of God, the excellency and perfection of God, the works and ways of God, are above our thoughts and apprehenſions. The nature of God, it is vaſt and infinite, Job xxxvi. 26. *God is great, and we know him not.* Job xxxvii. 23. *Touching the Almighty we cannot find him out.* Pſal. cxlv. 3. *His greatneſs is unſearchable.*

The excellencies and perfections of God; his immenſity, 2 Chron. ii. 6 *The heaven of heavens cannot contain him:* the eternity of his duration, *from everlaſting to everlaſting he is God;* we cannot imagine any limits of

of is preſence, nor bounds of his duration. The infi-
neſs of his knowledge, Pſal. cxlvii. 5. *His under-
ſtanding is infinite.* When we think of the wiſdom and
wledge of God, our beſt way is to fall into admira-
ti , Rom. xi. 35. *O the depth of the riches both of the
wiſdom and knowledge of God!*

Whereas the ſcripture ſpeaks of thoſe perfections of
G , which the creatures do in ſome meaſure and de-
g partake of, as his goodneſs, and power, and wiſ-
d , and holineſs, and immortality, it attributes them
in ich a peculiar and divine manner to God, as doth ex-
c le and ſhut out the creature from any claim, or
ſh e, or title to them, Matth. xix. 16, 17. *Why calleſt
th me good? there is none good but one, that is God.*
1 im. vi. 15, 16. *Who is the bleſſed, and only potentate,
wh only hath immortality.* 1 Tim. i. 17 *The only wiſe
G .* Rev. xv. 4. *For thou only art holy.* In ſo incon-
c vable a manner doth God poſſeſs theſe perfections
w ich he communicates, and we can only underſtand
th m as he communicates them, and not as he poſſeſſes
th m; ſo that when we conſider any of theſe divine
p fections, we muſt not frame notions of them con-
tr ry to what they are in the creature, nor muſt we
li it them by what they are in the creature, but ſay,
th goodneſs and the wiſdom of God are all this which
is in the creature, and much more, which I am not able
to comprehend; the tranſcendent degree, and the ſingu-
lity of theſe divine perfections, which are communi-
ble, is beyond what we are able to conceive.

The works of God; they are likewiſe unſearchable;
works of creation and of *redemption.* Job v. 9. *Which
th great things, and unſearchable, marvellous things, paſt
finding out.* And then he inſtanceth in the works of
od, Job xxvi. 14. *Lo, theſe are part of his ways: but
w little a portion is heard of him? and the thunder of
his voice who can underſtand?* So that he tells us ex-
preſly, we cannot find out the works of God; we do
not know part of them. The queſtion which he puts,
Job xxxvii. 16. *Doſt thou know the wondrous works of
him that is perfect in knowledge?* can only be anſwered
by the words of the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. civ. 24. *O Lord, how
wonderful are thy works! in wiſdom haſt thou made them
all.*

all. The work of redemption; in this there
forth ſuch wiſdom, mercy, and love, as our underſt
ings cannot reach. This work is called *the wiſdo
God in a myſtery! hidden wiſdom,* σοφία ἀποκεκρυ
1 Cor. ii. 7. The mercy, and grace, and love of
called, *the riches of God's mercy, the exceeding r
of his grace,* Eph. ii. 4, 7. Now riches is, when
cannot tell the utmoſt of them; *pauperis eſt numer
Eph. iii. 18. 19. That ye may be able to comprehend
all ſaints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth,
height, and to know the love of Chriſt which paſſeth kn
ledge.* When we have the largeſt apprehenſions of
love, ſo that we think we comprehend it and know
it paſſeth knowledge; yea, the effects of God's power
love, which he manifeſts in believers, are unſpeakab
for *he is able to do for us exceeding abundantly, above w
we can ask or think, according to the power which work
in us,* Eph. iii. 20. The peace which guards their ſo
paſſeth all underſtanding, Phil. iv. 7. Thoſe *joys wh
fill their hearts are not to be expreſſed,* 1 Pet. i. 8. W
read of *joy unſpeakable and full of glory.* The happin
which they hope for is inconceivable; it is that whi
*eye hath not ſeen, nor ear hard, nor hath entered into t
heart of man, which God hath laid up for us.*

The ways of God's providence are not to be trace
Pſal. lxxvii. 19. *Thy way is in the ſea, and thy pat
in the great waters, and thy footſteps are not known*
Eccleſ. iii. 11. *No man can find out the work that Go
maketh from the beginning to the end.* We are but of ye
ſterday, and know nothing. When we look upon God
providence, we take a part from the whole, and conſi
der it by itſelf, without relation to the whole ſeries o
his diſpenſation; we cannot ſee the whole of God's pro
vidence, at one view, and never ſee from the beginning
of the works of God to the end; therefore our know
ledge of them muſt needs be very imperfect, and full o
miſtakes, and falſe judgments of things; we cannot,
by our petty and ſhort-ſighted deſigns, judge of the
works of God, and the deſigns of providence; for *our ways
are not as his ways, nor our thoughts as his thoughts; but
as the heavens are high above the earth, ſo are his ways
above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts,* Iſa.
lv.

lv8, 9. The ways of God's mercy, Pſal. ciii. *As the heavens are high above the earth, ſo great is God's mercy.* Pl. cxxxix. 17,18. *How precious are thy thoughts unto me? how great is the ſum of them? If I ſhould count them, they are more in number than the ſand.* And the ways of God's judgments, the ſeverity and greatneſs of his judgment is not known. Pſal. xc. 11. *Who knows the power of thine anger? and who may ſtand before thee when thou art angry?* And the reaſons of his judgments are unſearchable. Pſal. xxxvi. 6. *Thy judgments are a great deep.* Rom. xi. 35. *How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out!* Theſe are the inſtances on the part of the object.

On the part of the ſubject, or the perſons capable of knowing God in any meaſure. The perfect knowledge of God is above a finite creature's underſtanding. Wicked men are ignorant of God, and full of falſe apprehenſions of him: The ſcripture gives this deſcription of them; they are thoſe that *know not God*, 2 Theſſ. i. 8. Wicked men are ſo far from knowing God to perfection, that they have hardly any true knowledge of him; for as the man himſelf is, ſo will God ſeem to be to him; the idea and notions which men have of God, is but the picture of their own complexion. To true knowledge there is required likeneſs: a man's mind muſt be like the thing he would underſtand; therefore the Apoſtle tells us, *the natural, or animal man, doth not receive the things of God*, he is not capable of them, becauſe his mind is unſuitable to them; he is πλήρης τὸ σώματος, full of body, " and he cannot reliſh ſpiritual things; even thoſe natural notions which wicked men have of God, are ſtrangely tinctured and obſcured by the temper of the man; they are *lux ſepulta in opaca materia*, " light buried and hid in matter " and darkneſs," in the blackneſs of a foul and impure heart; ſo that there is no queſtion of them, whether they comprehend God or not.

But good men *cannot find out God*; they have ſome falſe apprehenſions of him; all their apprehenſions are dark, have much of obſcurity in them; they know God to ſalvation, but not to perfection. In this life we do but

but know God in part, that is, in comparison the knowledge which our natures are capable of.

But I will instance yet higher; the angels and spirits of just men made perfect, though they have apprehensions of God, yet they do not arrive to per knowledge of him, they cannot *pervestigare ultio* "know the outmost of God;" the cherubims themsel are continually looking at the mercy seat. To wh the Apostle alludes, 1 Pet. i. 12. when he tells us mystery of God's mercy in the gospel was a thing *wh the angels desired to pry into.* In heaven, *that which in part shall be done away;* that is, our knowledge sh be as perfect as our natures are capable; but it shall finite. When we shall *see God face to face;* that is, ha an immediate vision of him, *and see him as he is;* th is, not having our understandings tinctured by any lu or passion that may darken our mind, or misrepresen the object; for the Apostle tells us, *we shall see him, b cause we shall be like him;* yet then we shall have shor and unadequate apprehensions of him, we shall still re tain our limited natures and finite understandings.

II. By way of conviction. Dost thou know perfectl the nature of a finite spirit, the perfection and the powe of an angel, how, being immaterial, they can act upon matter, and move that which can make no resistance to a spirit? Dost thou know how they can move themselves to a great distance in a moment, and dart themselves from one part of the world to another? Dost thou know how man is *formed in the lowest parts of the earth,* as the Psalmist expresseth it, and the curious frame of our bodies is wrought from such rude principles in so dark a shop? Canst thou give an account how the soul is united to the body, by what bands or holds a spirit is so closely and intimately conjoined to matter? Dost thou know how thyself understandest any thing, and canst retain the distinct ideas and notions of so many objects without confusion? Dost thou know the least parts of matter, how they are knit together; and by what cement they cleave so fast to one another, that they can hardly be separated?

Now, if the creatures be so unsearchable, and the knowledge of these be too hard for thee, is not the

Creator

reator of them much more incomprehenſible, who ɔſſeſſeth all theſe perfections which he communicates, id many which cannot be communicated to a crea-ire? If in natural and ſenſible things, *maxima pars e-rum quæ ſcimus, eſt minima pars eorum quæ neſcimus;* ow much more is it true of God, "that our igno-rance is more than our knowledge," when the whole irth, and all the creatures bear no proportion to him? a. xl. 15. 17. *Behold all the nations of the earth are the drop of the bucket, and as the ſmall duſt of the alance; all nations before him are nothing, and are ac-ounted to him leſs than nothing.*

III. By ſhewing you the clear reaſon of it, which is his, the diſproportion between the faculty and the ob-ect, the finiteneſs of our underſtandings, and the infi-iteneſs of the divine nature and perfections. *God is reater than our hearts;* and therefore as he knows ore than we do, as the Apoſtle reaſons, 1 John iii. 20. ɔ he is more than can be known by us; he is too vaſt n object for our underſtanding to entertain, for our inds to receive. Thou mayeſt as well mete out the eaven with a ſpan, and meaſure the waters in the hol-ɔw of thy hand, and comprehend the duſt of the earth n a little urn, and weigh the mountains in ſcales, and he hills in a little balance, as think to circumſcribe God in the narrow limits of thy thoughts, or to bring hat which is infinite within the compaſs of that which finite.

And there is not only the vaſtneſs and greatneſs of he object, but the glory and reſplendency of it does ſo azzle our ſight, that we cannot perfectly ſee it, 2 Tim. i. 16. *He dwelleth in light, which no man can approach nto; whom no man hath ſeen, nor can ſee.* As God is ɔo big, ſo he is too bright an object for our unde:ſtand-ɔgs; the preſence of his glory overpowers our minds, nd bears down our faculties, and conquers our under-:andings.

I come now to apply this doctrine of the incompre-ienſibleneſs of the divine nature. If the nature, and erfections, and ways, and works of God be incompre-ienſible, and paſt finding out;

1. It calls for our admiration, and veneration, and reverence. Theſe are the beſt apprehenſions of him t is incomprehenſible, a ſilent veneration of his excell cies is the beſt acknowledgment of them. We m admire what we cannot comprehend or expreſs. Za ix. 17. *How great is his goodneſs, and how great is beauty?* The beſt way to celebrate the praiſes of Go is that which Nehemiah uſeth, Neh. ix. 5. *And bleſ be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all bleſſi and praiſe.* Whenever we ſpeak or think of God, v neceſſarily detract from his perfections; but even t neceſſity is glorious to him, and this ſpeaks his perfec on, that the higheſt finite underſtanding muſt ha imperfect thoughts of him.

We ſhould make up in reverence and veneration wha we fall ſhort of in knowledge. Reverence is an ac knowledgment of diſtance; by our reverence of the di vine Majeſty, we ſhould beſt awe our hearts, in a ſen of the diſtance which is between his infinite nature an perfection, and our finite apprehenſions. Worldly great neſs will cauſe wonder, the thoughts of earthly majeſty will compoſe us to reverence; how much more ſhoul thoſe excellencies which are beyond what we can ima gine. Iſa. vi. you have there God repreſented *ſitting upon his throne*, and the *ſeraphims about him*, which are deſcribed to us as *having each ſix wings, and with twain they cover their faces.* Creatures of the brighteſt under ſtanding, and the moſt exalted purity and holineſs, co ver their faces in the preſence of God's glory; they chuſe rather to venerate God, than look upon him.

2. This calls for humility and modeſty. The conſideration of God's unſearchable perfections ſhould make the haughtineſs of man to ſtoop, and bring down his proud looks, *and God alone ſhould be exalted.* The thought of God's excellency ſhould abaſe us, and make us *vile in our own eyes*; it ſhould make all thoſe petty excellencies that we pride ourſelves in to vaniſh and diſappear. Thoſe treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge which are in God ſhould hide pride from man: it ſhould hide thoſe little parts and gifts which we are ſo apt to glory in, as the ſun hides the ſtars. When we conſider God, we ſhould be ſo far from admiring ourſelves, that we

ſhould,

ſhould, with an humble thankfulneſs, wonder that God ſhould regard ſuch inconſiderable nothings as we are. Pſal. viii. 1. 3. 4. *O Lord our God, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who haſt ſet thy glory above the heavens! When I conſider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the ſtars which thou haſt ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him? or the ſon of man, that thou viſiteſt him?* He that conſiders the glory of God, and the greatneſs of his works, will think ſo meanly of himſelf, that he will be aſtoniſhed that God ſhould mind him or viſit him. This is a noble ſtrain of humility in David, by which he acknowledgeth that the greateſt king of the earth, how conſiderable ſoever he may be in reſpect of men, is but a pitiful thing to God.

When we ſpeak to God, we ſhould do it with great humility. Eccleſ. v. 2, 3. *Let thy words be few, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth.* We ſhould ſay to God, Job xxxvii. 19. *Teach us what we ſhall ſay unto thee, for we cannot order our ſpeech by reaſon of darkneſs.* And when we think or ſpeak of him, we ſhould do it with great modeſty; we ſhould not raſhly pronounce or determine any thing concerning God. Simonides being aſked what God was, deſired one day's time to conſider; then he deſired two, and then four. The more we think of God, the leſs peremptory ſhall we be in defining him. He that conſiders that God is incomprehenſible, will not pretend to know all the ways of infinite knowledge, and the outmoſt of infinite power, and all the reaſons of God's ways and providences. He that rightly values his own ſhort underſtanding, and the unlimited perfections of God, will not be apt to ſay, this God cannot do, this he cannot know, ſuch ways are not agreeable to his wiſdom. He that knows God and himſelf, will be modeſt in theſe caſes, he will ἐπέχειν, abſtain from all peremptory pronouncing in theſe matters; he conſiders that one man many times differs ſo much from another in knowledge and ſkill of working, that he can do theſe things which another believes impoſſible: but we have pitiful thoughts of God, if we think the difference between one man and another, is any thing to the vaſt diſtance that is between the divine underſtanding and our ignorance,

the divine power and our weakness, the wisdom God and the folly of men.

3. The incomprehensibleness of God's perfectio calls for the highest degree of our affection. How shou we fear this great glorious God! Psal. xc. 11. *W knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to t fear, so is thy wrath.* Fear is the most infinite of all o passions, and fills us with the most endless jealousy an suspicions: God's wrath is greater than our fear; *ac cording to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*

How should we love him, when we are astonishe with admiratio nof God's goodness, and say, *How grea is thy goodness, and how great is thy beauty? Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!* How great should our love be to him? what manner of love should we return to him!

This calls for the highest degree of our faith. With what confidence should we rely upon him, *who is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above what we can ask or think!*

To conclude. This requires the highest degree of our service: how should our hearts be *enlarged to run the way of his commandments,* who hath *laid up for us* such things, *that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man?*

SERMON CLVII.

God the first cause, and last end.

ROM. xi. 36.

For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

HAving considered the more eminent and absolute perfections of the divine nature, as also that which results from the infinite excellency and perfection of God, compared with the imperfection of our understandings, I come in the last place to treat of such as are merely and purely relative; as that he

e is the first cause, and the last end of all things; to which purpose I have chosen these words of the Apostle for the subject of my present discourse, *For of him, and through him*, &c.

The dependence of these words upon the former is briefly this. The Apostle had been speaking before, in this chapter, several things that might tend to raise us to an admiration of the wisdom, and goodness, and mercy of God in the dispensation of his grace for the salvation of men, both Jews and Gentiles, and therefore would have us ascribe this work wholly to God; the contrivance of it to his wisdom, and not to our own counsels, ver. 34. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord? and who hath been his counsellor?* and the bestowing his grace to his free goodness and mercy, and not to any desert of ours, ver. 35. *Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?* Yea, and not only in the dispensation of grace, but of all good things; not only in this work of redemption, but also of creation, God is the fountain and original, and first cause, from whence every thing proceeds; and the last end, to which every thing is to be referred. For of him, &c. ἐξ αὐτοῦ, from him, the efficient cause producing all things; δι' αὐτοῦ by or through him, as the efficient conserving cause of all things; καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν, and to him, as the final cause of all things, and the end for which they were made.

The proposition I shall speak to, is, that God is the first cause, and last end.

1. I shall a little explain the terms.
2. Confirm the proposition.
3. Apply it.

First, For the explication of the terms.

I. That God is the first cause, signifies,

1. Negatively, that he had no cause, did not derive his being from any other, or does depend upon any other being; but that he was always, and eternally of himself.

2. Positively, that he is the cause of all things besides himself, the fountain and original of all created beings, from whom all things proceed, and upon whom all things depend; or, that I may use the expression of St. John, John i. 3. which I know is appropriated to the

econd person in the Trinity, *By him all things w made, and without him was nothing made that was m* So that when we attribute to God, that he is the fi we mean, that there was nothing before him, and t he was before all things, and that all things are by h

II. The last end, that is, that all things refer him; that is, the design and aim of all things that made, is the illustration of God's glory some way other, and the manifestation of his perfections.

Secondly, For the confirmation, I shall briefly, acc ding to my usual method, attempt it these two wa

1. By natural light. The notion of a God conta in it all possible perfection. Now the utmost perfecti we can imagine, is, for a being to be always of itse before all other beings; and not only so, but to be t cause of all other beings: that is, that there should nothing but what derives its being from him, and co tinually depends upon him; from whence follows, th all things must refer to him as their last end. For eve wise agent acts with design, and in order to an en Now the end is that which is best, which is most worth the attaining, and that is God himself. Now, his bein and perfections are already; and the best, next to exist nce of his being and perfections, is the manifestation c them, which is called God's glory; and this is the highe end that we can imagine, to which all the effects of th divine power, and goodness, and wisdom do refer.

And that these titles are to be attributed to God, i not only reasonable, when it is revealed and discover ed, but was discovered by the natural light of the Hea thens. Hence it was that Aristotle gave God those ti tles of the first being, the first cause, and the first mo ver; and his master Plato calls God 'the author and 'parent of all things, the maker and architect of the 'world, and of all creatures; the fountain and origi- 'nal of all things.' Porphyry calls him τὸ πρῶτον, the first; from whence he reasons to this sense, that 'he 'is the ultimate end, and that all things move to- 'wards God; that all motions center in him; because, 'saith he, it is most proper and natural for things to re- 'fer to their original, and to refer all to him from 'whom they receive all.' Antoninus, the Emperor

and

ne Philosopher, speaking of nature (which with the toks signifies God) had these words, which are so ve- y ke these of the Apostle, that they may seem to be tak n from him; ἐκ σοῦ πάντα, ἐν σοὶ πάντα, εἰς σὲ πάν- τα; "Of thee are all things, in thee are all things, to "thee are all things."

From scripture. Hither belong all those places wh re he declares himself to be the first and the last. Isa xli. 4. *Who hath wrought and done it, calling the ge- nerations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first, and wi the last, I am he.* Isa. xliii. 10. *Before me there w no God formed,* or as it is in the margin, *there was no ing formed of God, neither shall there be after me.* Is xliv. 6. *I am the first, and I am the last, and besides m there is no God.* Isa. xlviii. 12, 13. *I am the first; I n also the last; my hand hath laid the foundation of the ea h; my right hand hath spread the heavens*; which is a much as to say, he hath made the world, and was th first cause of all things. Rev. i. 8. *I am alpha and o ga, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord, which is and which was, and which is to come.*

But more expressly, 1 Cor. viii. 6. *But to us there is b one God, the father, of whom are all things, and we b him,* καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτὸν *and we to him, and for him.* Acts xvii. 24. *God that made the world, and all things t rein;* ver. 25. *He giveth to all life, and breath, and a things;* ver. 28. *In him we live, and move, and have o r being;* ver. 29. *Forasmuch then as we are the off- spring of God.*

Hither we may refer those texts which attribute the me to the second person in the Trinity, as the eternal wisdom and word of God, whereby all things were made. John i. 3. *All things were made by him, and with- t him was nothing made that was made*; ver. 10. *And he world was made by him.* 1 Cor. viii. 6. *And one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* Eph. iii. 9. *God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.* Col. i. 16. *By him were all things created that are in hea- ven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him, and for him, and he is be- fore all things, and by him all things consist.* Heb. i. 2.

By

By whom also he made the worlds. And, ver. 3. *holding all things by the word of his power.*

Thirdly, And *lastly*, To apply this doctrine.

Use *First*, If God be the first cause of all things, did at first produce all creatures, and does since pre them, and govern them, and disposeth of their con ments, and orders all things that befal them; hence let us learn,

1. With humility and thankfulness to own, and knowledge, and admire, and bless God, as the au and original of our being, as the spring and founta all the blessings and good things that we enjoy. I do but consider what these words signify, that God is first cause of all things, we shall see great reason to and acknowledge, to adore and praise him, and that the greatest humility, because we have not given him thing, but have received all from him; he is the c of all things, who did freely, and of his own good and pleasure, communicate being to us, without any c straint or necessity, but what his own goodness laid u him. Rev. iv. 11. *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to rec glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created things, and for thy pleasure they are and were creat* We could not before we were deserve any thing fr him, or move him by any argument, or importune h by intreaties to make us; but he freely gave us bei and ever since we depend upon him, and have been p served by him, and cannot subsist one moment witho the continued influence of the power and goodness whi first called us out of nothing. He is the author of all t good, and the fountain of all those blessings, which f the present we enjoy, and for the future hope for.

When he made us at first, he designed us for happ ness; and when we, by our sin and wilful miscarriag fell short of the happiness which he designed us for, h sent his Son into the world for our recovery, and gav his life for the ransom of our souls. He hath not onl admitted us into a new covenant, wherein he hath pro mised pardon and eternal life to us, but he hath als purchased these blessings for us, by the most endearing price, the blood of his own Son, and hath saved us in such a manner as may justly astonish us. Upon thes

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considerations we should awaken ourselves to the praise of God, and, with the holy Psalmist, call up our spirits, and summon all the powers and faculties of our souls to assist us in this work. Psal. ciii. 1, 2, 3, 4. &c. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name: bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thy iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies;* it is he that satisfies our souls with good things, that hath promised eternal life and happiness to us, and must confer and bestow this upon us: therefore our souls, and all that is within us, should bless his holy name.

2. If God be the first cause, that is, orders all things that befal us, and, by his providence, disposeth of all our concernments, this should teach us with patience and quietness to submit to all events, to all evils and afflictions that cōme upon us, as being disposed, by his wise providence, and coming from him: we are apt to attribute all things to the next and immediate agent, and to look no higher than second causes, not considering that all the motions of natural causes are directly subordinate to the first cause; and all the actions of free creatures are under the government of God's wise providence; so that nothing happens to us besides the designs and intention of God.

And, methinks, this is one particular excellency of the style of the scripture above all other books, that the constant phrase of the sacred dialect is to attribute all events, excepting sins only, to God: so that every one that reads it cannot but take notice, that it is wrote with a more attentive consideration of God than any other book, as appears by those frequent and express acknowledgements of God as the cause of all events; so that what in other writers would be said to be done by this or that person, is ascribed to God: therefore it is often said, that the Lord did this and that, stirred up such an enemy, brought such a judgment. And we all find that holy men in scripture make excellent use of this consideration, to argue themselves into patience and contentedness in every condition. So Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.*

So

So Job, he did not consider the Sabeans and Chald who had carried away his oxen and camels, and sla servants; nor the wind which had thrown dow house, and killed his sons and his daughters; but he l up to God, the great governor and disposer of all events; *The Lord giveth, and the Lord hath taken a blessed be the name of the Lord.* So David, Psal. xxxv *I was dumb, and spake not a word, because thou, L didst it.* So our blessed Saviour, when he was read suffer, he did not consider the malice of the Jews, w was the cause of his death, but looks to a higher hand *cup which my father gives me to drink, shall not I drink*

He that looks upon all things as coming from sec causes and does not eye the first cause, the good and Governor, will be apt to take offence at every cross unwelcome accident. Men are apt to be angry when slings water upon them as they pass in the streets; no man is offended if he is wet by rain from heav When we look upon evils as coming only from m we are apt to be impatient, and know not how to b them; but we should look upon all things as under government and disposal of the first cause, and the c cumstances of every condition as allotted to us by t wise providence of God; this consideration, that it is t hand of God, and that he hath done it, would still the murmurings of our spirits. As when a seditious m titude is in an uproar, the presence of a grave and v nerable person will hush the noise, and quell the tumu so if we would but represent God as present to all ac ons, and governing and disposing all events, this wou still and appease our spirits, when they are ready to ot and mutiny against any of his dispensations.

Use *the Second*, If God be the last end of all, let make him our last end, and refer all our actions to h glory. This is that which is due to him, as he is t first cause, and therefore he does most reasonably r quire it of us.

And herein likewise the scripture doth excel all oth books, that is, doth more frequently and expressly mi us of this end, and calls upon us to propose it to ou selves as our ultimate aim and design. We shoul love him as our chief end, Matth. xxii. 37. *Thou sha*

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love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thus, to love God, is that which in the language of the schools is loving God as our chief end. So likewise the Apostle requires, that we should refer all the actions of our lives to this end, 1 Cor. x. 31, *Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God;* that we should *glorify him in our souls and in our bodies, which are his.* He is the author of all the powers that we have, and therefore we should use them for him; we do all by him, and therefore we should do all to him.

And that we may the better understand ourselves as to this duty, I shall endeavour to give satisfaction to a question or two, which may arise about it.

1*st*, Whether an actual intention of God's glory is necessary to make every action that we do good and acceptable to God?

Answ. I. It is necessary that the glory of God, either formally or virtually, should be the ultimate end and scope of our lives, and all our actions; otherwise they will be defective in that which in moral actions is most considerable, and that is the end. If a man should keep all the commandments of the gospel, this excepted, of making God's glory his supreme end, only with a design to gain reputation, or some other advantage in the world; this very thing would vitiate all, and render him unacceptable to God.

II. It is very requisite and convenient, as a good sign, that we should very frequently, actually think upon, and intend this end; for if it be very much out of our thoughts, we have reason to be jealous of ourselves, that we do not intend it at all.

III. It is so far from being necessary, that we should in every action have this intention of God's glory, that it is not morally possible that we should, no more than it is possible, that a man that goes a journey of a thousand miles should every step he takes have actual thoughts of his journey's end; nor is it more necessary; for consideration of the end is only so far necessary, as it is necessary to guide and quicken us in the use of means; as it is not necessary for a man to think of his journey's end, farther than to direct and excite him to go thither.

And

And this appears farther by the contrary; it is no
cessary to make a sinful action, that a man should
mally, much less actually, intend God's dishonour
is enough to constitute a man a wicked man, if he
lingly transgress God's law, the doing whereof doe
consequence reflect a dishonour upon him; so, on
other hand, it is sufficient to make an action good
acceptable, if it be conformable to God's law,
such as by consequence redounds to God's glory.

2d Question. Whether the glory of God may,
ought to be considered, as an end separate and dist
from our own happiness?

Ans. I shall speak but briefly to this, because I h
elsewhere spoken to it; but in that little which I h
to say for satisfaction to this question, I will proc
by these steps.

I. By the glory of God, we mean the demonstrati
or illustration, or manifestation of some or of all his p
fections, more especially his goodness, and mercy, a
justice, and wisdom, and power, and holiness.

II. It is plain that the manifestation of some of th
perfections is a thing that may be separated from t
happiness of a creature; for his holiness, and justice, a
power, may, and shall be manifested in the final a
eternal ruin of impenitent sinners.

III. The manifestation of any of God's perfectio
ought many times to be propounded by us as an en
distinct and separate from our respective happiness; suc
a happiness as respects only some particulars, and som
particular duration, in opposition to absolute and eterna
happiness. In this sense our Saviour says, that he *sough
not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him*
by which he does not mean, that he quitted everlastin
glory and happiness; but that, in order to the glor
of God, he did, for a time, lay aside his own glory
and divest himself of it while he was in this world; so
the Apostle tells us, that he was encouraged to do this
out of a respect to a greater glory. Heb. xii. 2. *Who,
for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, de-
spising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of
the throne of God.* And in this sense we are to under-
stand the command of self-denial in the gospel, with re-
ference

fence to our particular or temporal, not our eternal i ereſt; and that it is no more, is plain from the argu- rnt our Saviour uſes to encourage this ſelf-denial, the pmiſe of a far greater happineſs than that we deny; n man that *forſakes father or mother for my ſake*, but ſll *have eternal life:* and proportionably we are to derſtand thoſe commands of loving Chriſt more than ſelves, that is, more than any temporal intereſt.

IV. The manifeſtation of any of God's perfections, ither ought, nor can reaſonably be propounded by us, an end ſeparated from, or oppoſite to our eternal leſſedneſs; that is, we cannot naturally or reaſonably ire the glory of God ſhould be advanced, though it re to our final ruin, either by annihilation or eter- l miſery.

1. We cannot either naturally or reaſonably deſire od ſhould be glorified by our annihilation.

1*ſt*, Not naturally. Becauſe ſuch a deſire would be ectly contrary to the natural deſire of ſelf-preſerva- n, which God hath planted himſelf in us, and is moſt imate and eſſential to our nature.

2. Not reaſonably. Becauſe it is utterly unimagin- le how God can be glorified by the annihilation of a eature. All the attributes that we can imagine can manifeſted herein, are power and ſovereignty; his wer hath already been as much manifeſted in crea- g and making the creature out of nothing, as it can by reducing it into nothing; for to create is the very ne demonſtration of power as to annihilate. And, as his ſovereignty, God will never manifeſt that in con- diction to his goodneſs, or wiſdom, or any other per- tion of the divine nature. To unmake a creature, d take away the being which he had given, would gue either a failure of his goodneſs towards the crea- e, or that he did repent he had made it, which would lect upon his wiſdom and conſtancy. I do not ſay, at in juſtice God cannot annihilate a creature; far it from me: for what we have was his own, and may, without any wrong to the creature, take it ain.

Much leſs can we naturally deſire that God ſhould glorified in our eternal miſery. The reaſons which I

give about annihilation are stronger here; therefor
cannot naturally desire it, nor reasonably, for th
monstration of his power, or sovereignty, or justic
holiness, which I think are all the attributes whic
can imagine to be glorified hereby: not as the n
festation of his power, for that would be as much
nifested in the happiness as misery of the creature:
of his sovereignty, for God will not manifest tha
contradiction to his goodness, upon which nothing
reflect more, than merely, *pro arbitrio*, for his plea
to make an innocent creature for ever miserable:
his justice and holiness, for these pre-suppose sin and
merit in the creature, out of hatred to which he m
it miserable; but God hath declared that he este
himself more glorified by the obedience and happi
of his creatures, than by their sin and destruction;
if it were reasonable to desire the justice and holine
God might be glorified in my eternal ruin, which I h
deserved by sin; this would plainly follow from it, t
it were reasonable *to sin, that justice might abound*, wh
of the two is a greater absurdity than that which
Apostle condemns, of *sinning, that grace may aboun*

V. There is a strict and inviolable connexion betw
the greatest glory of God, and our obedience and h
piness; I say, between his greatest glory, because h
seems himself more glorified by the obedience and h
piness of his creatures, than by their ruin and misc
and that we may believe it, we have his oath for
As I live, saith the Lord, I delight not in the death
sinner, but rather that he should turn and live. And i
observable, that the Apostle, in 1 Cor. x. 31, 32,
Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to
glory of God; giving none offence, neither to the Je
nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God, even a
please all men, in all things, not seeking mine own pro
but the profit of many, that they may be saved; expla
the glorifying of God, by edifying and promoting the s
vation of others.

VI. We may consider the glory of God, as some wa
distinct from our happiness; that is, we may consic
the manifestation of his goodness, and mercy, and w
dom, in our happiness, as that which results from i

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but this is not enough to make it a distinct end, but the same diversly considered; as the publick good is that which results from the general good of particular persons, but cannot reasonably be propounded by any man, as an end distinct from the general happiness of particular persons, without ruining and destroying the notion of publick good.

VII. Though considered as we are particular beings, we can have no greater end than our own happiness, in which God is eminently glorified; yet, as we are part of the whole creation and workmanship of God, which is the noblest consideration of ourselves, the glory of God, which results from the manifestation of all his perfections in and about his creatures, is precisely our ultimate end, and yet not an end really distinct from our own happiness; and therefore it is most proper, and becoming, and agreeable to the wise stile of scripture, to give our end its denomination, not from the more particular and narrow, but the more noble consideration of ourselves, as we are parts of the whole creation, and workmanship of God; as it is more generous and becoming for the members of a civil society to mention the publick good as their end, than their private happiness and advantage, though that be so really and effectually promoted by the publick good.

Thus I have finished what I proposed on this argument, and concerning the attributes of God in general; *of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things: To him be glory for ever.* Amen.

SERMON CLVIII.

Of doing good.

A Spital ſermon, preached at Chriſt-church on Eaſ
Tueſday, April 14. 1691.

GALAT. vi. 9, 10.

Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due ſeaſon ſhall reap, if we faint not: As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men; eſpecially unto them who are of the houſhold of faith.

THE Apoſtle, in theſe words, recommends unto us a great and comprehenſive duty, the doing of good; concerning which, the text offers theſe five particulars to our conſideration:

1. The nature of the duty itſelf, which is called *well doing*, ver. 9. and *doing good*, ver. 10.

2. The extent of this duty in reſpect of its object, which is all mankind; *Let us do good unto all men, eſpecially unto them who are of the houſhold of faith.*

3. The meaſure of it, *As we have opportunity.*

4. Our unwearied perſeverance in it; *Let us not be weary in well-doing.*

5. The argument and encouragement to it; becauſe *in due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not; therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good*, &c.

I. I will conſider the nature of the duty itſelf of *well-doing, and doing good.* And this I ſhall explain to you as briefly as I can, by conſidering the extent of the act of doing good, and the excellency of it. And,

1. The extent of the act. It comprehends in it all thoſe ways wherein we may be beneficial and uſeful to one another. It reaches not only to the bodies of men, but to their ſouls, that better and more excellent part of ourſelves, and is converſant in all thoſe ways and kinds,

inds, whereby we may ſerve the temporal or ſpiritual ood of our neighbour, and promote either his preſent, r his future and eternal happineſs.

To inſtruct the ignorant, or reduce thoſe that are in rror; *to turn the diſobedient to the wiſdom of the juſt,* nd reclaim thoſe that are engaged in any evil courſe, by ood counſel, and ſeaſonable admonition, and by pru- ent and kind reproof; to reſolve and ſatisfy the oubting mind; to confirm the weak; to heal the bro- en-hearted, and to comfort the melancholy and trou- led ſpirits: theſe are the nobleſt ways of charity, be- auſe they are converſant about the ſouls of men, and end to procure and promote their eternal felicity.

And then *to feed the hungry, to cloath the naked, re- eaſe the impriſoned;* to redeem the captives, and to indicate thoſe who are injured and oppreſſed in their erſons, or eſtates, or reputation; to repair thoſe who re ruined in their fortunes; and, in a word, to relieve nd comfort thoſe who are in any kind of calamity or iſtreſs.

All theſe are but the ſeveral branches and inſtances f this great duty here in the text, of doing good; tho' t hath, in this place, a more particular reſpect to the haritable ſupply of thoſe who are in want and neceſſi- y; and therefore, with a more particular regard to hat, I ſhall diſcourſe of it at this time. You ſee the extent of the duty. We will, in the

2d Place, Briefly ſay ſomething of the excellency of t; which will appear, if we conſider, that it is the i- mitation of the higheſt excellency and perfection. To do good, is to be like God, who is *good, and doth good;* and it is to be like him in that which he eſteems his greateſt glory; it is to be like the Son of God, who, when he was pleaſed to take our nature upon him, and live here below, and to dwell among us, *went about do- ing good.* And it is to be like the bleſſed angels, the higheſt rank and order of God's creatures, whoſe great employment is to be *miniſtring ſpirits, for the good of men.* So that, for a man to be kind, and helpful, and beneficial to others, is to be a good angel, and a ſavi- our, and a kind of God too.

It is an argument of a great, and noble, and g rous mind, to excite our thoughts and cares to the cernments of others, and to employ our intereſt, power, and endeavours for their benefit and advanta whereas a low, and mean, and narrow ſpirit, is contr ed and ſhrivelled up within itſelf, and cares only fo own things, without any regard to the good and h pineſs of others.

It is the moſt noble work in the world; becauſe t inclination of mind, which prompts us to do good the very temper and diſpoſition of happineſs. Solom after all his experience of worldly greatneſs and pl ſure, at laſt pitched upon this, as the great felicity human life, and the only good uſe that is to be m of a proſperous and plentiful fortune; Eccleſ. iii. *I know*, ſays he, ſpeaking of riches, *that there is no g in them, but for a man to rejoice and do good in his l.* And, certainly, the beſt way to take joy in an eſtate to do good with it: and a greater and wiſer than S lomon has ſaid it, even he, *who is the power and w dom of God*, has ſaid it, that *it is a more bleſſed thi to give than to receive.*

Conſider farther, that this is one of the great and ſu ſtantial parts of religion, and next to the love and h nour which we pay to almighty God, the moſt acce able ſervice that we can do to him; it is one table the law, and next to the *firſt and great commandment, loving the Lord our God*, and very like to it: *and the ſ cond is like unto it*, ſays our Saviour, *Thou ſhalt love t neighbour as thyſelf;* like to it, in the excellency of it and equal to it, in the neceſſary obligation of it. *A this commandment*, ſays St. John, 1 epiſt. chap. iv. ver. 2 *have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his br ther alſo.* The firſt commandment, indeed, excels i the dignity of the object, becauſe it enjoins the love God; but the ſecond ſeems to have the advantage i the reality of its effects: for the love of God conſiſts i our acknowledgment and honour of him; but our *righ teouſneſs and goodneſs extend not to him;* we can do hi no real benefit and advantage: but our love to men i really uſeful and beneficial to them: for which reaſo God is contented, in many caſes, that the external ho

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ho and worſhip which he requires of us by his poſitive
co mands, ſhould give way to that natural duty of love
an mercy which we owe to one another: *I will have
mercy*, ſays God, in the Prophet Amos, *and not ſacrifice.*
And to ſhew how great a value God puts upon this
duty, he hath made it the very teſtimony of our love
to himſelf; and for want of it, hath declared that he
will reject all our other profeſſions and teſtimonies of
love to him, as falſe and inſincere. *Whoſo hath this
world's goods*, ſaith St. John 1 epiſt. chap. iii. 17. *and
ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of
compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?*
And again, chap. iv. ver. 20. *If a man ſay, I love God,
and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth
not his brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God
whom he hath not ſeen?*

You ſee the duty here recommended, both in the ex-
tent, and in the excellency of it; *Let us do good.* I
proceed to conſider, in the

I. Place, the extent of this duty, in reſpect of its object,
which is all mankind, but more eſpecially Chriſtians,
thoſe that are of the ſame faith and religion; *Let us do
good unto all men, eſpecially unto thoſe that are of the
houſhold of faith.* So that the object, about which this
duty is converſant, is very large, and takes in all man-
kind; *Let us do good unto all men.* The Jews confined
their love and kindneſs to their own kindred and nation;
and becauſe they were prohibited familiarity with ido-
latrous nations, and were enjoined to maintain a per-
petual enmity with Amalek, and the ſeven nations of
Canaan, whom God had caſt out before them, and de-
voted to ruin, they looked upon themſelves as perfect-
ly diſcharged from all obligation of kindneſs to the reſt
of mankind: and yet it is certain, that they were expreſ-
ly enjoined by their law, to be kind to ſtrangers, becauſe
they themſelves had been ſtrangers in the land of Egypt.
But our Saviour hath reſtored this law of love and cha-
rity to its natural and original extent; and hath decla-
red every one that is of the ſame nature with ourſelves,
to be our neighbour and our brother, and that he is to
be treated by us accordingly, whenever he ſtands in need
of our kindneſs and help; and to ſhew that none are

out

out of the compass of our charity, he hath e
commanded us to extend it to those who, of all
can least pretend to it, even our enemies and perse

So that if the question be about the extent
charity in general, these two things are plainly e
ed by the Christian religion:

1. Negatively, That we should not hate, no
ill-will to any man, nor do him any harm or mi
Love worketh no evil to his neighbour, saith the Ap
Rom. xiii. 10. And this negative charity every
may exercise towards all men, without exception,
that equally; because it does not signify any po
act, but only that we abstain from enmity and ha
from injury and revenge, which it is in every
power, by the grace of God, and the due care and
vernment of himself, to do.

2. Positively. The law of charity requires, tha
should bear an universal good-will to all men, and
every man's happiness, and pray for it, as sincerel
we wish and pray for our own; and if we be sincer
our wishes and prayers for the good of others, we
be so in our endeavours to procure and promote it.

But the great difficulty is, as to the exercise of
charity, and the real expressions and effects of it,
doing good to others; which is the duty here mean
the text, and, as I told you before, does more parti
larly relate to the relief of those who are in want a
necessity. And the reason of the difficulty is, beca
no man can do good to all in this kind, if he would;
not being possible for any man to come to the kno
ledge of every man's necessity and distress; and if
could, no man's ability can possibly reach to the supp
and the relief of all mens wants. And, indeed, this
mitation the text gives to this duty; *As we have oppo
tunity*, says the Apostle, *let us do good unto all men*
which either signifies, as occasion is offered, or as w
have ability of doing, or both; as I shall shew afterward

So that it being impossible to exercise this charity t
all men that stand in need of it, it is necessary to mak
a difference, and to use prudence and discretion in th
choice of the most fit and proper objects. We do no
know the wants of all men; and therefore the bound

of

our knowledge do of neceſſity limit our charity with- a certain compaſs; and of thoſe whom we do know, e can relieve but a ſmall part, for want of ability: om whence it follows, that though a man were ne- r ſo charitably diſpoſed, yet he muſt, of neceſſity, ſet me rules to himſelf, for the management of his cha- ty to the beſt advantage. What thoſe rules are, can- ot minutely and nicely be determined: when all is one, much muſt be left to every man's prudence and ſcretion, upon a full view and conſideration of the aſe before him, and all the circumſtances of it; but et ſuch general rules may be given, as may ſerve for he direction of our practice in moſt caſes; and, for the ſt, every man's prudence, as well as it can, muſt de- rmine the matter. And the rules which I ſhall give, hall be theſe:

1*ſt*, Caſes of extremity ought to take the firſt place, nd do for that time challenge precedence of all other onſiderations. If a perſon be in great and preſent di- reſs, and his neceſſity ſo urgent, that if he be not im- ediately relieved, he muſt periſh; this is ſo violent a aſe, and calls ſo loud for preſent help, that there is no eſiſting of it, whatever the perſon be; though a per- ect ſtranger to us, though moſt unworthy, though the reateſt enemy we have in the world, yet the greatneſs f his diſtreſs does ſo ſtrongly plead for him, as to ſilence ll conſiderations to the contrary; for, after all, he is a an, and is of the ſame nature with ourſelves; and the onſideration of humanity ought, for that time, to pre- ail over all objections againſt the man, and to prefer im to our charity, before the neareſt relation and riend, who is not in the like extremity. In other caſes, we not only may, but ought to relieve our friends, and hoſe that have deſerved well of us, in the firſt place; ut if our enemy be in extremity, then that divine pre- ept takes place, *If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him drink.*

2*dly*, In the next place, I think, that the obligation of nature, and the nearneſs of relation, does challenge a preference; for there is all the reaſon in the world, if other things be equal, that we ſhould conſider and ſupply the neceſſity of thoſe who are of our blood and kindred,

and

and members of our family, before the neceſſities of ſtrangers, and thoſe who have no relation to us. There is a ſpecial duty incumbent upon us, and another obligation beſides that of charity, to have a particular care and regard for them. In this caſe, not only Chriſtianity, but nature, ties this duty upon us: 1 Tim. v. 8. *If any man provide not for his own, eſpecially for thoſe of his own houſe* for them that are of his family, *he hath denied the faith, and is worſe than an infidel;* that is, he doth not only offend againſt the law of Chriſtianity, but againſt the very dictates of nature, which prevail even among infidels. And our Saviour hath told us, that when our parents ſtand in need of relief, it is more acceptable to God, to employ our eſtates that way, than to devote them to him, and his immediate ſervice; and that it is a kind of ſacrilege to conſecrate that to God whereby our parents may be profited, and provided for in their neceſſity.

3*dly*, The obligation of kindneſs, and benefits, lays the next claim to our charity. If they fall into want who have obliged us by their former kindneſs and charity, both juſtice and charity do challenge from us a particular conſideration of their caſe; and proportionably, if we ourſelves have been obliged to their family, or to any other that are nearly related to them.

4*thly*, Thoſe *who are of the houſhold of faith*, and of the ſame religion, and members of the ſame myſtical body, and do partake of the ſame holy myſteries, the body and blood of our bleſſed Saviour, the ſtricteſt bond of love and charity; theſe fall under a very particular conſideration in the exerciſe of our charity; and of this the Apoſtle puts us in mind, in the laſt words of my text, *Let us do good unto all men, eſpecially unto thoſe that are of the houſhold of faith.* God hath a ſpecial love and regard for ſuch; and thoſe whom God loves ought to be very dear to us.

And this, perhaps, was a conſideration of the firſt rank, in thoſe times when Chriſtians lived among Heathens, and were expoſed to continual wants and ſufferings; but it ſignifies much leſs now, that Chriſtianity is the general profeſſion of a nation, and is too often made uſe of to very uncharitable purpoſes; to confine

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ns bounty and benefits to their own sect and party, a f they, and none but they, were *the houshold of faith;* principle, which I know not whether it hath more Judaism or of Popery in it.

5thly, After these, the merit of the persons who are e objects of our charity, and all the circumstances be- nging to them, are to be valued and considered, and e accordingly to proportion our charity, and the de- ees of it. I shall instance in some particulars, by hich a prudent man may judge of the rest.

Those who labour in an honest calling, but yet are ppressed with their charge, or disabled, for a time, by ckness, or some other casualty; these, many a time, eed as much, and certainly deserve much better, than ommon beggars; for these are useful members of the ommon-wealth; and we cannot place our charity bet- er, than upon these, who do what they can to support hemselves.

Those likewise who are fallen from a rich and plen- iful condition, without any fault or prodigality of heir own, merely by the providence of God, or some general calamity: these are more especially objects of our charity, and liberal relief.

And those also who have been charitable, and have liberally relieved others, when they were in condition to do it; or the children, or near relations of those who were eminently charitable and beneficial to man- kind, do deserve a particular regard in our charity. Mankind being, as I may say, bound in justice, and for the honour of God's providence, to make good his pro- mise, to preserve such from extreme necessity.

And, lastly, Those whose visible wants, and great age and infirmities, do plead for more than ordinary pity, and do, at first sight, convince every one that sees them, that they do not beg out of laziness, but of ne- cessity, and because they are not able to do any thing towards their own support and subsistence.

There are innumerable circumstances more, which it would be endless to reckon up; but these which I have mentioned are some of the chief; and, by propor- tion to these, we may direct ourselves in other cases.

6thly, Those whom we certainly know to be true ob- jects of charity are to be considered by us, before those who

who are ſtrangers to us, and whoſe condition we not know, yea though, in common charity, we do n disbelieve them; becauſe, in reaſon and prudence, are obliged to prefer thoſe who are certainly know to us; ſince we find by experience, that there are ma cheats and counterfeit beggars, who can tell their ſto and carry about teſtimonials of their own making; an likewiſe, becauſe we run the hazard of miſplacing ou charity, when there are objects enough beſides, where w are ſure we ſhall place it right; and charity miſplaced as it is in truth and reality no charity in itſelf, ſo it i hardly any in us, when we ſquander it ſo imprudently as to paſs by a certain and real object, and give it t thoſe of whom we are not certain that they are tru objects of charity. In this blind way a man *may giv all his goods to the poor*, as he thinks, and yet do n real charity. And therefore, unleſs we be able to relieve *every one that asks*, we muſt, of neceſſity, make a difference, and uſe our beſt prudence in the choice of the moſt proper objects of our charity.

And yet we ought not to obſerve this rule ſo ſtrictly, as to ſhut out all whom we do not know, without exception: becauſe their caſe, if it be true, may ſometimes be much more pitiable, and of greater extremity, than the caſe of many whom we do know; and then it would be uncharitable to reject ſuch, and to harden our hearts ſo far againſt them as utterly to diſbelieve them; becauſe it is no fault of theirs, that we do not know them; no, their wants may be real notwithſtanding that; eſpecially when their extremity ſeems great, we ought not to ſtand upon too rigorous a proof and evidence of it, but ſhould accept of a fair probability.

7thly, Thoſe who ſuffer for the cauſe of religion, and are ſtripped of all for the ſake of it, ought to have a great precedence in our charity to moſt other caſes. And this of late hath been, and ſtill is the caſe of many among us, who have fled hither for refuge, from the tyranny and cruelty of their perſecutors, and have been, by a moſt extraordinary charity of the whole nation, more than once extended to them, moſt ſeaſonably relieved; but eſpecially by the bounty of this great city, whoſe liberality, upon theſe occaſions, hath been beyond all

ll example, and even all belief. And I haue often hought, that this very thing, next to the mercy and oodneſs of almighty God, hath had a particular influnce upon our preſervation and deliverance from thoſe errible calamities which were juſt ready to break in upon us; and, were we not ſo ſtupidly inſenſible of this reat deliverance which God hath wrought for us, and o horribly unthankful to him, and to the happy inſtruments of it, might ſtill be a means to continue the faour of God to us. And what cauſe have we to thank God, who hath allotted to us this more bleſſed, and more merciful part, *to give*, and not *to receive*; to be free from perſecution ourſelves, that we might give refuge and relief to thoſe that are perſecuted!

III. We muſt conſider the meaſure of our charity, ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν, which our tranſlation renders, *as we have opportunity*; others, *as we have ability*: ſo that this expreſſion may refer either to the occaſions of our charity, or to the ſeaſon of it, or to the proportion and degree of it.

1. It may refer to the occaſions of our charity, *as we have opportunity, let us do good*, that is, according as the occaſions of doing good ſhall preſent themſelves to us, ſo often as an opportunity is offered. And this is an argument of a very good and charitable diſpoſition, gladly to lay hold of the occaſions of doing good, as it were to meet opportunities when they are coming towards us. This forwardneſs of mind in the work of charity, the Apoſtle commends in the Corinthians, 2 Cor. ix. 2. *I know the forwardneſs of your minds, for which I boaſt of you to them of Macedonia*: and this he requires of all Chriſtians, Tit. iii. 8. that they ſhould *be ready to every good work*; and, 1 Tim. vi. 18. that we be *ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate*. Some are very ready to decline theſe opportunities, and to get out of the way of them; and when they thruſt themſelves upon them, and they cannot avoid them, they do what they do grudgingly, and not *with a willing mind*.

2. It may refer to the ſeaſon of this duty, ὡς καιρὸν ἔχομεν, "whilſt we have time;" ὡς for ἕως, "whilſt "this life laſts;" ſo Grotius does underſtand and interpret this phraſe: and then the Apoſtle does hereby

intimate to them the uncertainty of their lives, especially in those times of persecution. And this consideration holds in all times, in some degree, that our lives are short and uncertain; that it is but a little while that we can serve God in this kind, namely, while we are in this world, in this vale of misery and wants. In the next world there will be no occasion, no opportunity for it; we shall then have nothing to do, but to reap the reward of the good we have done in this life, and to receive that blessed sentence from the mouth of the great Judge of the world, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat*, &c. And, *Euge, bone serve! Well done, good and faithful servant! thou hast been faithful in a little, and I will make thee ruler over much.* God will then declare his bounty and goodness to us, and open those inexhaustible treasures of glory and happiness, which all good men shall partake of, in proportion to the good which they have done in this world. Or else,

3. Which I take to be the most probable meaning of this phrase, it may refer to the degree of this duty, in proportion to our ability and estate; as we have ability, *let us do good unto all men.* And this the phrase will bear, as learned men have observed; and it is very reasonable to take it in this sense, at least as part of the meaning of it, either expressed, or implied: for, without this, we cannot exercise charity, tho' there were never so many occasions for it; and then this precept will be of the same importance with that of the son of Sirach, Eccles. xxxv. 10. *Give unto the Most High according as he hath enriched thee;* and with that counsel, Tob. iv. 7. *Give alms,* ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων, *according to thy substance;* and, ver. 8. *If thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly.* And this may be reasonably expected from us; for wherever his providence gives a man an estate, it is but in trust for certain uses and purposes, among which charity and alms is the chief: and we must be accountable to him, whether we have disposed it faithfully to the ends for which it was committed to us. It is an easy thing with him, to level mens estates, and to give every man a competency; but he does on purpose

oſe ſuffer things to be diſtributed ſo unequally, to try nd exerciſe the virtues of men in ſeveral ways; the aith and patience of the poor, the contentedneſs of hoſe in a middle condition, the charity and bounty of he rich. And, in truth, wealth and riches, that is, an ſtate above what ſufficeth our real occaſions and neceſ-ities, is in no other ſenſe a bleſſing, than as it is an op-portunity put into our hands, by the providence of God, of doing more good; and if we do not faithfully employ it to this end, it is but a temptation and a ſnare; *and the ruſt of our ſilver and our gold will be a witneſs againſt us*, and we do but *heap up treaſures together againſt the laſt day*.

But what proportion our charity ought to bear to our eſtates, I ſhall not undertake to determine: the circum-ſtances of men have too much variety in them to admit of any certain rule; ſome may do well, and others may do better; every man as God hath put into his heart, and according to his belief of *the recompence which ſhall be made at the reſurrection of the juſt*. I ſhall only ſay, in general, that if there be firſt a free and willing mind, that will make a man charitable to his power; for *the liberal man will deviſe liberal things*. And we can-not propoſe a better pattern to ourſelves in this kind, than the King and Queen, who are, as they ought to be, (but as it very ſeldom happens) the moſt bright and ſhining examples of this greateſt of all graces and vir-tues, charity and compaſſion to the poor and perſecu-ted. I proceed to the

IV. Thing conſiderable in the text, *viz.* Our un-wearied perſeverance in this work of doing good; *Let us not be weary in well-doing*. After we have done ſome few acts of charity, yea, though they ſhould be very conſiderable, we muſt not ſit down, and ſay we have done enough: there will ſtill be new objects, new occa-ſions, new opportunities for the exerciſe of our charity, ſpringing up and preſenting themſelves to us. Let us never think that we can do enough in the way of doing good. The beſt and the happieſt beings are moſt con-ſtant and unwearied in this work of doing good. The holy angels of God are continually employed in mini-ſtring for the good of *thoſe who ſhall be heirs of ſalvati-*

tion: and the Son of God, when he appeared in our nature, and *dwelt among us*, that he might be a perfect and familiar example to us of all holiness and virtue, *he went about doing good* to the bodies, and to the souls of men. How diligent and unwearied was he in this work! it was his employment and his pleasure, his *meat and drink*, the joy and the life of his life. And God himself, though he is infinitely and perfectly good in himself, yet he still continues *to do good*, and is never weary of this blessed work. It is the nature, and the perfection, and the felicity of God himself: and how can we be weary of that work, which is an imitation of the highest excellency and perfection, and the very essence of happiness!

V. And lastly, Here is the argument and encouragement to the chearful discharge of this duty; *because in due season we shall reap, if we faint not: therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men. In due season we shall reap;* that is, sooner or later, in this world or in the other, we shall receive the full reward of our well-doing.

And now I have explained this duty to you as plainly and briefly as I could; the hardest part of my task is yet behind, to perswade men to the practice of it: and, to this purpose, I shall only insist upon the promise in the text, *Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not:* we shall reap the pleasure and satisfaction of it in our own minds, and all the other mighty advantages of it in this world, and the vast and unspeakable reward of it in the other.

1. We shall reap the pleasure and satisfaction of it in our own minds; and there is no sensual pleasure that is comparable to the delight of doing good. This Cato makes his boast of, as the great comfort and joy of his old age, *Conscientia bene actæ vitæ, multorumque benefactorum, recordatio jucundissima.* "The remembrance of a "well spent life, and of many benefits and kindnesses "done by us to others, is one of the most pleasant things "in the world." Sensual pleasures soon die and vanish: but that is not the worst of them, they leave a sting behind them; and when the pleasure is gone, nothing remains but guilt, and trouble, and repentance? whereas the

e reflexion upon any good we have done is a perpe-
al ſpring of peace and pleaſure to us, and no trouble
d bitterneſs enſues upon it; the thoughts of it lie e-
n and eaſy in our minds; and ſo often as it comes to
r remembrance, it miniſters freſh comfort to us.

2. We ſhall likewiſe reap other mighty advantages
it in this world. It is the way to derive a laſting
eſſing upon our eſtates. What we give in alms and cha-
y is conſecrated to God, and is one of the chiefeſt and
oſt acceptable ſacrifices in the chriſtian religion: ſo
e Apoſtle tells us, Heb. xiii. 16. *To do good, and to*
mmunicate, forget not; for with ſuch ſacrifices God is
ell pleaſed. It is like the firſt fruits under the law,
hich, being dedicated and offered up to God, did de-
ve a bleſſing upon their whole harveſt.

And it procures for us alſo the bleſſing and prayers
thoſe to whom we extend our charity; their bleſſing,
ſay, upon us, and ours, and all that we have: and *is*
a ſmall thing in our eye, to have, as Job ſpeaks, *the*
eſſing of them, who are ready to periſh, to come upon us?
he fervent prayer of the poor for us *availeth much;* for
od hath a ſpecial *regard to the prayers of the deſtitute,*
nd his ear is open to their cry.

Few men have faith to believe it, but certainly cha-
ty is a great ſecurity to us in the times of evil, and
at not only from the ſpecial promiſe and providence
f God, which is engaged to preſerve thoſe from want,
ho are ready to relieve the neceſſity of others: Prov.
. 25. *The liberal ſoul ſhall be made fat; and he that*
atereth, ſhall be watered alſo himſelf. And Prov. xxviii.
7. *He that giveth unto the poor ſhall not lack. He ſhall*
t be afraid in the evil time; and in the days of dearth he
all be ſatisfied, ſays the Pſalmiſt. But beſides the pro-
iſe and providence of God, our charity and alms are
kewiſe a great ſecurity to us, from the nature and rea-
n of the thing itſelf. Whoſoever is charitable to o-
ers, does wiſely beſpeak the charity and kindneſs of o-
ers for himſelf againſt the day of neceſſity; for there
nothing that makes a man more and ſurer friends than
ur bounty; this will plead for us, and ſtand our friend
our greateſt troubles and danger; *for a good man,*
ith the Apoſtle, that is, for one that is ready to ob-

lige others by great kindneſſes and benefits, *one wo even dare to die.* It has ſometimes happened, that t obligation which a man hath laid upon others, by chearful and ſeaſonable charity, hath, in time of d n and extremity, done him more kindneſs than all his ſtate could do for him: *Alms,* ſaith the wiſe man, *h delivered from death.*

And in times of publick diſtreſs, and when we are b ſet with cruel and powerful enemies, who, *if God w not on our ſide, would ſwallow us up quick,* the publi charity of a nation does, many times, prove its b ſafeguard and ſhield. There is a moſt remarkable p ſage to this purpoſe, Ecclus. xxix. 11, 12, 13. *Lay thy treaſure according to the commandments of the m High, and it ſhall bring thee more profit than gold. Sh up alms in thy ſtore-houſes, and it ſhall deliver thee fr all affliction. It ſhall fight for thee againſt thine enem better than a mighty ſhield, and a ſtrong ſpear.*

And of this I doubt not but we of this nation, by t great mercy and goodneſs of almighty God, have h happy experience in our late wonderful deliverance, u der the conduct and valour of one of the beſt and brave of Princes, and to whom, by too many among us, t moſt unworthy and unthankful returns have been mad for the unwearied pains he hath undergone, and for t deſperate hazards he hath expoſed himſelf to, for o ſakes, that ever were made to ſo great and generous benefactor; ſo great a benefactor, I ſay, not only t theſe nations, but to all Europe, in aſſerting and vind cating their liberties, againſt the inſolent tyranny a pride of one of the greateſt oppreſſors of mankind; whom I may ſay, as Job does of the Leviathan, Jo xli. 33. 34. *Upon earth there is not his like: he behol eth all high things; he is king over all the children pride.*

And beyond all this, the bleſſing of God does deſcen upon the poſterity of thoſe who are eminently char table, and great benefactors to mankind. This David ob ſerves in his time; *I have been young,* ſays he, *and no am old; yet have I not ſeen the righteous forſaken, nor h ſeed begging bread;* and what he means by *the righteo*

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ww, he explains in the next words, *he is ever merciful, nd lendeth.*

I ſhall only add upon this head, that the practice of ts virtue will be one of our beſt comforts at the hour f death, and that we ſhall then look back upon all the ood we have done in our life with the greateſt content- ent and joy imaginable. Xenophon, in his Cyrus, hich he deſigned for the perfect idea of a good Prince, preſents him, in the laſt minutes of his life, addreſſing himſelf to God to this purpoſe: "Thou knoweſt that I have been a lover of mankind; and now that I am leaving this world, I hope to find that mercy from thee which I have ſhewed to others." Theſe words at excellent Heathen hiſtorian thought fit to come om the mouth of ſo excellent a Prince, as he had de- ribed him, juſt as he was leaving the world; by which e may ſee what the light of nature thought to be ne beſt comfort of a dying man. This brings me to ne

3. And laſt particular which I mentioned, the vaſt nd unſpeakable reward which this grace and virtue of harity will meet with in the other world. It will plead or us at the day of judgment, and procure for us a moſt glorious *recompence at the reſurrection of the juſt*, and hat proportionable to the degrees of our charity: 2 Cor. x. 6. *He which ſoweth ſparingly, ſhall reap alſo ſpar- ingly; and he which ſoweth bountifully, ſhall reap boun- tifully.* And from this conſideration the Apoſtle encou- rageth our perſeverance in well-doing; *Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not;* that is, we ſhall certainly meet with the reward of it, if not in this world, yet in the other.

And now that I have declared this duty to you, to- gether with the mighty pleaſure, and advantages, and rewards of it, I crave leave to preſent you with ſome of the beſt occaſions, and opportunities of the exerciſe and practice of it: and for your encouragement hereto, I ſhall read to you the preſent ſtate of the chief hoſpi- tals belonging to this great city, and of the diſpoſal of their charity for the laſt year.

And now I have laid before you theſe great objects of your charity, and the beſt arguments I could think of

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to incline and ſtir up your minds to the exerciſe of t excellent grace and virtue; as there is no time left for I having, I am afraid, already tired your patience, I I hope, there is no need to preſs this duty any furth upon you, ſince you are ſo willing and forward of you ſelves; and ſo very ready to every good work. Th great city hath a double honour due to it, of being bot the greateſt benefactors in this kind, and the moſt faith ful managers, and diſpoſers of it; and I am now in place moſt proper for the mention of Chriſt's Hoſpital a Proteſtant foundation of that moſt pious and excellen Prince Edward VI. which, I believe, is one of the beſ inſtances of ſo large and ſo well managed a charity thi day in the world.

And now, to conclude all, if any of you know any better employment than *to do good*; any work that will give truer pleaſure to our minds; that hath greater and better promiſes made to it, *the promiſes of the life that now is, and that which is to come*: that we ſhall reflect upon with more comfort when we come to die; and that, through the mercies and merits of our bleſſed Saviour, will ſtand us in more ſtead at the day of judgment; let us mind that work: but if we do not, let us apply ourſelves to this buſineſs of charity with all our might, and *let us not be weary in well-doing, becauſe in due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not.*

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great ſhepherd of the ſheep, through the blood of the everlaſting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will through Jeſus Chriſt; to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, thankſgiving and praiſe, both now, and for ever. Amen.

SER-

SERMON CLIX.

The neceſſity of repentance and faith.

ACTS xx. 21.

Teſtifying both to the Jews, and alſo to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

WHO have ſeen St. Paul in the pulpit, was one of thoſe three things which St. Auguſtine thought ſuch the wiſhing for. And ſure it were very deſirable to have ſeen this glorious inſtrument of God, who did ſuch wonders in the world, to have heard that mighty and powerful eloquence of his, which was ſo *mighty through God, for the caſting down of ſtrong holds, and the ſubduing of men to the obedience of the goſpel*: to have beheld the zeal of this holy man, who was all on fire for God, with what ardency of affection, and earneſtneſs of expreſſion, he perſuaded men to come in to Chriſt, and entertain the goſpel. This were very deſirable; but ſeeing it is a thing we cannot hope for, it would be ſome ſatisfaction to our curioſity, to know what St. Paul preached, what was the main ſubject of his ſermons, whither he referred all his diſcourſes, and what they tended to. This he tells us in the words that I have read to you, that the main ſubſtance of all his ſermons was *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

The occaſion of the words was briefly this; St. Paul being in his journey to Jeruſalem, and intending to be there by the day of Pentecoſt, that he might not be hindered in his journey, he reſolves to paſs by Epheſus, not only to call to him the elders of the church, to charge them with their duty, and the care of the church; but to engage them hereto, he tells them how he had carried and demeaned himſelf among them, ver. 18. with

with what diligence and vigilance he had watch
them, with what affection and earneſtneſs he had
ed to them, ver. 19, 20. And here in the text
them, what had been the ſum of his doctrine,
ſubſtance of thoſe many ſermons he had preached
them, and what was the end and deſign of all
courſes, *viz.* to perſuade men to *repentance towa*
and faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; teſtifying
the Jews and Greeks, &c.

I ſhall explain the words a little, and then fi
the obſervations which I intend to ſpeak to, be
deſign this only as a preface to ſome larger diſcou
faith and repentance.

For explication. Teſtifying, the word is διαμαρτύρομενος, which ſignifies to teſtify, to prove a th
teſtimony; ſo it is uſed, Heb. ii. 6. *but one in a*
place teſtifieth, ſaying. In Heathen writers the w
often uſed in a law ſenſe, for conteſting by law
pleading in a cauſe; and from hence it ſignifies,
neſtly to contend or perſuade by arguments and thr
ings. In the uſe of the LXX, it ſignifies to prot
convince, to preſs earneſtly, to perſuade. It i
moſt frequently by St. Luke in a very intenſe ſig
tion, and is ſometimes joined with exhorting, wh
an earneſt perſuading to a thing, Acts ii. 40. *An*
many other words did he teſtify and exhort, ſaying,
yourſelves from this untoward generation; and with pr
ing, Acts viii. 25. *And when they had teſtified and pr*
ed the word of the Lord; and ſo, Acts xviii. 5. *I*
preſſed in ſpirit, he teſtified to the Jews, that Jeſu
the Chriſt. Being preſſed in ſpirit, ſignifies intentio
vehemency in teſtifying to them, that he did vehen
ly endeavour to convince them; it ſeems to be eq
lent to the expreſſion, ver. 28. where it is ſaid, *A*
did mightily convince the Jews that Jeſus was the Ch
That is, did uſe ſuch perſuaſions and arguments as
ſufficient to convince; and, t mention no more,
xxviii. 23. *He expounded and teſtified the kingdo*
God, perſuading them concerning Jeſus.

St. Paul, in his epiſtle to Timothy, uſeth theſe w
in a moſt vehement ſenſe, for giving a ſolemn cha
1 Tim. v. 21. *I charge thee before God, and the*

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Chriſt, the word is διαμαρτύρομαι; and ſo, 2 Tim. . *charging them before the Lord, that they ſtrive not* o *words*; and ſo, 2 Tim. iv. 1. *I charge thee before* o *and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; and here, in the text, he word ſeems to be of a very high and intenſe ſignifica- ic becauſe of the circumſtances mentioned before and ft; he tell us before, that he taught them *at all ſea-* or ver. 18. *publickly, and from houſe to houſe*, ver. 20. A afterwards, at the 31. ver. that *he warned them day* a *night with tears*. So that *teſtifying to the Jews re-* pe *nce and faith*, muſt ſignify his preſſing and perſuad- in of them with the greateſt vehemency, to turn from th ſins, and believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; his ch ging on them theſe things as their duty, his plead- in with them the neceſſity of faith and repentance, and e neſtly endeavouring to convince them thereof.

Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Je- ſ Chriſt: what is the reaſon of this appropriation of r ntance and faith, the one as properly reſpecting God, a the other our Lord Jeſus Chriſt? I anſwer, repen- t ce doth properly reſpect God, becauſe he is the party o nded, and to whom we are to be reconciled; the f th of the goſpel doth properly refer to the Lord Je- ſ Chriſt, as the chief and principal object of it; ſo t t, by *teſtifying to them repentance toward God*, &c. e are to underſtand that the Apoſtle did earneſtly preſs d perſuade them to repent of their ſins, whereby they d offended God, and to believe on the Lord Jeſus hriſt, as the Meſſias, the perſon that was ordained of od, and ſent to be the Saviour of the world.

From the words thus explained, this is the obſervati- n that doth naturally ariſe.

That repentance and faith are the ſum and ſubſtance f the goſpel; and that miniſters ought with all ear- eſtneſs and vehemency to preſs people to repent and be- eve, to charge them with theſe as their duty, and, by ll means, to endeavour to convince them of the neceſ- ity of them.

In the handling of this I ſhall do theſe two things.

1. Shew you what is included in repentance and faith, hat you may ſee that they are the ſum of the goſpel. And,

2. Shew

2. Shew you the neceſſity of them.

I. What is included in theſe.

1. Repentance; this properly ſignifies a cha mind, a conviction that we have done amiſs, ſo a truly ſorry for what we have done, and heartily t that we had not done it. To repent, is to alt mind, to have other apprehenſions of things th had, to look upon that now as evil, which we di before; from whence follows ſorrow for what we done, and a reſolution of mind for the future not again that which appears now to us to be ſo evil, we are aſhamed of it, and troubled for it, and wi had never done it. So that repentance implies a viction that we have done ſomething that is evil an ful, contrary to the law we are under, and thoſe gations of duty and gratitude that lie upon us, whe God is higly provoked and incenſed againſt us, anc in danger of his wrath, and the ſad effects of his diſp ſure; upon which we are troubled, and grieved, an ſhamed for what we have done, and wiſh we had b wiſer, and had done otherwiſe; hereupon we reſolve ver to do any thing that is ſinful, that is contrary our duty and obligations to God, and by which we n provoke him againſt us. Theſe two things are conta ed in a true repentance, a deep ſenſe of and ſorrow the evils that are paſt, and the ſins we have committe and a firm purpoſe and reſolution of obedience for t future, of abſtaining from all ſin, and doing whatever our duty; the true effect of which reſolution, is t breaking off the practice of ſin, and the courſe of a wic ed life, and a conſtant courſe of obedience.

2. Faith in Chriſt is an effectual believing the revel tion of the goſpel, the hiſtory and the doctrine of it the hiſtory of it, that there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſ Chriſt, that he was the true Meſſias, propheſied of an promiſed in the old Teſtament, that he was born, an lived, and preached, and wrought the miracles that ar recorded, that he was crucified and roſe again, and a ſcended into heaven, that he was the Son of God, anc ſent by him into the world, by his doctrine to inſtruct, and by the example of his life to go before us in the way to happineſs, and by the merit and ſatisfaction of

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is death and ſufferings, to appeaſe and reconcile God o us, and to purchaſe for us the pardon of our ſins and ternal life, upon the conditions of faith, and repen- ance, and ſincere obedience; and that to enable us to he performance of theſe conditions, he promiſed and af- erward ſent his holy Spirit, to accompany the preach- ng of his goſpel, and to aſſiſt all Chriſtians to the doing of that which God requires of them; this is the hiſtory of the goſpel.

Now the doctrine of it contains the precepts, and pro- miſes, and threatenings of it, and faith in Chriſt includes a firm belief of all theſe; of the precepts of the goſpel, as the matter of our duty, and the rule of our life; and of the promiſes and threatnings of the goſpel, as argu- ments to our duty, to encourage our obedience, and de- ter us from ſin. So that he that believes the Lord Je- ſus, believes him to be the great guide and teacher ſent from God, to bring and conduct men to eternal happi- neſs, and that therefore we ought to hearken to him, and follow him; this is to believe his prophetical of- fice. He believes that he is the author of ſalvation, and hath purchaſed for us forgiveneſs of ſins, ranſom from hell, and eternal life and bleſſedneſs upon the conditions before mentioned; and therefore that we ought to rely upon him only for ſalvation, to own him for our Savi- our, and to beg of him his holy Spirit, which he hath promiſed to us, to enable us to perform the conditions required on our part; this is to believe his prieſtly of- fice. And, laſtly, he believes that the precepts of the goſpel, being delivered to us by the Son of God, ought to have the authority of laws upon us, and that we are bound to be obedient to them; and, for our encourage- ment, if we be ſo, that there is a glorious and eternal reward promiſed to us; and, for our terror, if we be not, there are terrible and eternal puniſhments threat- ened to us; to which rewards, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt at the day of judgment will ſentence men, as the great Judge of the world; and this is to believe the kingly office of Chriſt: and this is the ſum of that which is meant by *faith towards the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, which the Apoſtle ſaith was one ſubject of his preaching.

And the proper and genuine effect of this faith is t live as we believe, to conform our lives to the doctrin to the truth whereof we aſſent. Hence it is that tr Chriſtians, that is, thoſe who faſhioned their lives acco ding to the goſpel, are called believers; and the whol of Chriſtianity is many times contained in this word be lieving, which is the principle of a Chriſtian life. As i the Old Teſtament all religion is expreſſed by *the fea of God*; ſo in the new, by *faith in Chriſt*.

And now you ſee what is included in repentance an faith, you may eaſily judge, whether theſe be not th ſum of the goſpel, that men ſhould forſake their ſins, an turn to God, and believe in the revelation of the goſpe concerning Jeſus Chriſt, that is, heartily entertain and ſubmit to it. What did Chriſt preach to the Jews, but that they ſhould repent of their ſins, and believe on him as the Meſſias? And what did the Apoſtles preach, but to the ſame purpoſe? When St. Peter preached to the Jews, Acts ii. the effect of his ſermon, and the ſcope of it was to perſuade them *to repent and be baptized in the name of Jeſus*, that is, to profeſs their belief in him, ver. 38. And ſo Acts iii. 19. This is the concluſion of his diſcourſe, *Repent therefore, and be converted*; and then he propounded Chriſt to them, as the object of their faith, being the great Prophet that was propheſied of by Moſes, who ſhould *be raiſed up among them*, ver. 22. So likewiſe St. Paul, when he preached to the Jews and Gentiles, theſe were his great ſubjects, Acts xvii. 30. This is the concluſion of his ſermon to the Athenians, to perſuade them to repent, by the conſideration of a future judgment, and to perſuade them to believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who was to be the Judge of the world, from the miracle of his reſurrection; *But now he commands all men every where to repent, becauſe he hath appointed a day*, &c. *whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead*. So that you ſee that theſe are the great doctrines of the goſpel, and were the ſum of the Apoſtles preaching; all their ſermons were perſuaſives to theſe two duties of repentance and faith.

II. For the neceſſity of theſe doctrines. They are neceſſary for the eſcaping of eternal miſery, and attaining

ng of everlaſting happineſs. And this will appear, by conſidering the nature of them, and the relation they have to both theſe.

For the avoiding of eternal puniſhment, it is neceſſary the guilt ſhould be removed, which is an obligation to puniſhment, and that cannot be but by pardon; and ſure we cannot imagine that God will ever pardon us without repentance; he will never remit to us the puniſhment of ſin, ſo long as we tell him we are not at all troubled for what we have done, and we are of the ſame mind ſtill, and will do the ſame again; and, till we repent, we tell God this, and we may be ſure God will not caſt away his pardons upon thoſe that deſpiſe them; ſo that repentance is neceſſary to the eſcaping of hell.

And faith in Chriſt is neceſſary to it; for if this be the method of God's grace, not to pardon ſin without ſatisfaction, and Jeſus Chriſt hath made ſatisfaction for ſin by the merit of his ſufferings; and if it be neceſſary that we ſhould believe this, that the benefit hereof may redound to us; then faith in Chriſt is neceſſary to the obtaining of the pardon of ſin, by which the guilt of ſin is removed, that is, our obligation to eternal puniſhment.

And then for attaining ſalvation. Chriſt having in the goſpel revealed to us the way and means to eternal happineſs, it is neceſſary that we ſhould believe this revelation of the goſpel by Jeſus Chriſt in order to this end. So that you ſee the neceſſity of faith and repentance, becauſe without theſe we can neither eſcape miſery, nor attain to happineſs.

I ſhould now come to draw ſome inferences from this diſcourſe, but I will firſt give ſatisfaction to a query or two, to which this diſcourſe ſeems to have given occaſion.

1. *Query.* You will ſay, why do I call repentance a doctrine of the goſpel? It is a doctrine of nature. Natural religion tells us, that when we have offended God, we ought to be ſorry for it, and reſolve to amend and reform.

Anſw. I do not make the doctrine of repentance proper to the goſpel, as if it had not been revealed to the world before; but becauſe it is a doctrine which the go-

ſpel very much preſſeth and perſuadeth men to, and b
cauſe the great motives and enforcements of it are p
culiar to the goſpel. So that the doctrine of repentanc
conſidered with thoſe powerful reaſons and argumen
to it which the goſpel furniſheth us withal, is in th
ſenſe proper to the goſpel, and not known to the worl
before.

There are two motives and enforcements to repen
tance which the goſpel furniſheth us with.

1*ſt*, Aſſurance of pardon and remiſſion of ſins, in caſ
of repentance, which is a great encouragement to re-
pentance, and which, before the goſpel, the world had
never any firm and clear aſſurance of.

2*dly*, Aſſurance of eternal rewards and puniſhments
after this life, which is a ſtrong argument to perſuade
men to change their lives, that they may avoid the mi-
ſery that is threatened to impenitent ſinners, and be qua-
lified for the happineſs which it promiſeth to repentance
and obedience. And this the Apoſtle tells us in the fore-
mentioned place, Acts xvii. 30, 31. is that which doth,
as it were, make repentance to be a new doctrine that
did come with the goſpel into the world, becauſe it was
never before enforced with this powerful argument, *the
times of that ignorance God winked at; but now he calls
upon all men every where to repent, becauſe*, &c. When
the world was in ignorance, and had no ſuch aſſurance
of a future ſtate, of eternal rewards and puniſhments after
this life, the arguments to repentance were weak and
feeble, in compariſon of what they now are; the neceſ-
ſity of this duty was not ſo evident. But now God hath
aſſured us of a future judgment, now exhortations to re-
pentance have a commanding power and influence upon
men; ſo that repentance, both as it is that which is very
much preſſed and inculcated in the goſpel, and as it hath
its chief motives and enforcements from the goſpel, may
be ſaid to be one of the great doctrines of the goſpel.

2. *Query*. Whether the preaching of *faith in Chriſt*,
among thoſe who are already Chriſtians, be at all ne-
ceſſary? Becauſe it ſeems very improper to preſs thoſe
to believe in Chriſt, who are already perſuaded that he is
the

the Meſſias, and do entertain the hiſtory and doctrine of the goſpel.

Anſ. The faith which the Apoſtle here means, and which he would perſuade men to, is an *effectual belief of the goſpel*; ſuch a faith as hath real effects upon men, and makes them to live as they believe; ſuch a faith as perſwades them of the need of theſe bleſſings that the goſpel offers, and makes them to deſire to be partakers of them, and, in order thereto, to be willing to ſubmit to thoſe terms, and conditions of holineſs and obedience which the goſpel requires. This is the faith we would perſwade men to, and there is nothing more neceſſary to be preſſed upon the greateſt part of Chriſtians than this: for how few are there among thoſe who profeſs to believe the goſpel, who believe it in this effectual manner, ſo as to conform themſelves to it? The faith which moſt Chriſtians pretend to is merely negative; they do not diſbelieve the goſpel, they do not conſider it, nor trouble themſelves about it; they do not care, nor are concerned whether it be true or not; but they have not a poſitive belief of it, they are not poſſeſſed with a firm perſuaſion of the truth of thoſe matters which are contained in it; if they were, ſuch a perſuaſion would produce real and poſitive effects. Every man naturally deſires happineſs, and it is impoſſible that any man that is poſſeſſed with this belief, that, in order to happineſs, it is neceſſary for him to do ſuch and ſuch things; and that if he omit or neglect them, he is unavoidably miſerable, that he ſhould not do them. Men ſay they believe this or that, but you may ſee in their lives, what it is they believe. So that the preaching of *this faith in Chriſt*, which is the only true faith, is ſtill neceſſary.

I. *Inference.* If *repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, be the ſum and ſubſtance of the goſpel, then from hence we may infer the excellency of the Chriſtian religion, which inſiſts only upon thoſe things that do tend to our perfection and our happineſs. Repentance tends to our recovery, and the bringing of us back as near as may be to innocence. *Primus innocentiæ gradus eſt non peccaſſe: ſecundus, pœnitentia:* and then *faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, though it be very comprehenſive, and contains many things in it, yet no-

thing but what is eminently for our advantage, and
very much conduce to our happineſs. The hiſt
part of the goſpel acquaints us with the perſon an
ctions of our Saviour, which conduceth very much t
underſtanding of the author and means of our ſalva
The doctrinal part of the goſpel contains what Go
quires on our part, and the encouragements and a
ments to our duty, from the conſideration of the rec
pence and rewards of the next life. The precept
Chriſt's doctrine are ſuch as tend exceedingly to the
fection of our nature, being all founded in reaſon, in
nature of God, and of a reaſonable creature; I ex
only thoſe poſitive inſtitutions of the chriſtian relig
the two ſacraments, which are not burdenſome,
are of excellent uſe. This is the firſt.

II. We may learn from hence what is to be the
and end of our preaching, to bring men to repenta
and a firm belief of the goſpel; but then it is to be c
ſidered, that we preach repentance, ſo often as we pre
either againſt ſin in general, or any particular ſin or vi
and ſo often as we perſwade to holineſs in general, or
the performance of any particular duty of religion,
to the exerciſe of any particular grace; for repenta
includes the forſaking of ſin, and a ſincere reſoluti
and endeavour of reformation and obedience. And
preach repentance ſo often as we inſiſt upon ſuch con
derations and arguments, as may be powerful to det
men from ſin, and to engage them to holineſs. A
we preach *faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt* ſo oft
as we declare the grounds of the Chriſtian religion, a
inſiſt upon ſuch arguments as tend to make it credibl
and are proper to convince men of the truth and reaſo
ableneſs of it; ſo often as we explain the myſtery
Chriſt's incarnation, the hiſtory of his life, death, r
ſurrection, aſcenſion, and interceſſion, and the prop
ends and uſe of theſe; ſo often as we open the metho
of God's grace for the ſalvation of ſinners, the nature
the covenant between God and us, and the condition
of it, and the way how a ſinner is juſtified, and hat
his ſins pardoned, the nature and neceſſity of regenera
tion and ſanctification; ſo often as we explain the pre
cepts of the goſpel, and the promiſes and threatening

oit, and endeavour to convince men of the equity of Chriſt's commands, and to aſſure them of the certainty o the eternal happineſs which the goſpel promiſes to tem that obey it, and of the eternal miſery which the gſpel threatens to thoſe that are diſobedient; all this ipreaching *faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

III. This may correct the irregular humours and itch j many people, who are not contented with this plain d wholeſome food, but muſt be gratified with ſublime tions and unintelligible myſteries, with pleaſant paſges of wit, and artificial ſtrains of rhetorick, with nice d unprofitable diſputes, with bold interpretations of rk prophecies, and peremptory determinations of what ill happen next year, and a punctual ſtating of the me when Antichriſt ſhall be thrown down, and Babyn ſhall fall, and who ſhall be employed in this work. r if their humour lies another way, you muſt apply ourſelves to it, by making ſharp reflections upon maters in preſent controverſy and debate; you muſt dip our ſtile in gall and vinegar, and be all ſatire and inective againſt thoſe that differ from you, and teach people to hate one another, and to fall together by the ars; and this men call goſpel-preaching, and ſpeaking f ſeaſonable truths.

Surely St. Paul was a goſpel-preacher, and ſuch an one as may be a pattern to all others; and yet he did none of theſe; he preached what men might underſtand, and what they ought to believe and practiſe, in a plain and unaffected and convincing manner; he taught *ſuch things as made for peace, and whereby he might edify and build up men in their holy faith.* The doctrines that he preached will never be unſeaſonable, that men ſhould leave their ſins, and believe the goſpel, and live accordingly.

And if men muſt needs be gratified with diſputes and controverſies, there are theſe great controverſies between God and the ſinner to be ſtated and determined; whether this be religion to follow our own luſts and inclinations, or to endeavour to be like God, and to be conformed to him, in goodneſs, and mercy, and righteouſneſs, and truth, and faithfulneſs? Whether Jeſus Chriſt be not the Meſſias and Saviour of the world? Whether

faith

faith, and repentance, and ſincere obedience, be n
terms of ſalvation, and the neceſſary conditions o
pineſs? Whether there ſhall be a future judg
when all men ſhall be ſentenced according to
works? Whether there be heaven and hell? Wh
good men ſhall be eternally and unſpeakably happ
wicked men extremely and everlaſtingly miſera
Theſe are the great controverſies of religion, upon v
we are to diſpute on God's behalf againſt ſinners.
aſſerts, and ſinners deny theſe things, not in words
which is more emphatical and ſignificant, in their
and actions. Theſe are practical controverſies of f
and it concerns every man to be reſolved and dete
ned about them, that he may frame his life accord
ly.

And ſo for repentance; God ſays, repentance is a
ſaking of ſin, and a thorough change and amendm
of life; the ſinner ſays, that it is only a formal cor
ſion, and a ſlight asking of God forgiveneſs: God c
upon us ſpeedily and forthwith to repent; the ſin
ſaith it is time enough, and it may ſafely be deferred
ſickneſs or death; theſe are important controverſies
matters of moment. But men do not affect comm
truths; whereas theſe are moſt neceſſary; and, inde
whatever is generally uſeful and beneficial, ought to
common, and not to be the leſs valued, but the mc
eſteemed for being ſo.

And as theſe doctrines of faith and repentance are n
ver unſeaſonable, ſo are they more peculiarly prope
when we celebrate the holy ſacrament, which was inſt
tuted for a ſolemn and ſtanding memorial of the Chriſt
an religion, and is one of the moſt powerful argumen
and perſuaſives to repentance and a good life.

The faith of the goſpel doth more particularly reſpe
the death of Chriſt; and therefore it is called faith i
his blood, becauſe that is more eſpecially the object c
our faith; the blood of Chriſt, as it was a ſeal of th
truth of his doctrine, ſo it is alſo a confirmation of al
the bleſſings and benefits of the new covenant.

And it is one of the greateſt arguments in the world
to repentance. In the blood of Chriſt, we may ſee our
own guilt, and, in the dreadful ſufferings of the Son o
God,

od the juſt deſert of our ſins; *He hath born our griefs, d carried our ſorrows; he was wounded for our tranſ- ſions, and bruiſed for our iniquities:* therefore the mmemoration of his ſufferings ſhould call our ſins to mmbrance, the repreſentation of his body broken ou melt our hearts; and ſo often as we remember t his blood was ſhed for us, our eyes ſhould run down it rivers of tears; ſo often as we look upon him whom e ave pierced, we ſhould mourn over him. When the on f God ſuffered, the rocks were rent in ſunder; and ma not the conſideration of thoſe ſufferings be effectual o reak the moſt ſtony and obdurate heart?

What can be more proper when we come to his ſa- rament, than the renewing of our repentance? When we partake of this paſſover, we ſhould eat it with bitter bs. The moſt ſolemn expreſſions of our repentance al ſhort of thoſe ſufferings, which our bleſſed Saviour nderwent for our ſins. If our head were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears, we could never ſufficiently ament the curſed effects and conſequences of thoſe pro- vocations which were ſo fatal to the Son of God.

And that our repentance may be real, it muſt be ac- companied with the reſolution of a better life; *for if we return to our ſins again, we trample under foot the Son of God, and prophane the blood of the covenant, and out of the cup of ſalvation we drink our own damnation,* and turn that which ſhould ſave us into an inſtrument and ſe of our own ruin.

SER-

SERMON CLX

Of confeſſing and forſaking ſin, in orde pardon.

Preached on Aſh-Wedneſday.

PROV. xxviii. 13.

He that covereth his ſins ſhall not proſper; but whoſ confeſſeth and forſaketh them, ſhall have mercy.

SInce we are all ſinners, and liable to the juſti God, it is a matter of great moment to our fort and happineſs, to be rightly informed by a means, and upon what terms, we may be reconcil God, and find mercy with him. And to this pu the text gives us this advice and direction, *Whoſo c ſeſſeth and forſaketh his ſins, ſhall have mercy.*

In which words there is a great bleſſing and be declared and promiſed to ſinners, upon certain con ons. The bleſſing and benefit promiſed is the mercy favour of God, which comprehends all the happy e of God's mercy and goodneſs to ſinners: and the co tions upon which this bleſſing is promiſed are two, feſſion of our ſins, and forſaking of them; and theſe contain in them the whole nature of that great and ceſſary duty of repentance, without which a ſinner have no reaſonable hopes of the mercy of God.

1. Here is a bleſſing or benefit promiſed, which is mercy and favour of God: and this, in the full ext of it, comprehends all the effects of the mercy and go neſs of God to ſinners, and doth primarily import pardon and forgiveneſs of our ſins. And this proba Solomon did chiefly intend in this expreſſion; for ſo mercy of God doth moſt frequently ſignify in the Teſtament, *viz.* the forgiveneſs of our ſins. And t

e ophet explains it, Isa. lv. 7. *Let the wicked forke is ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and t hu return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and o Gd, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Et now, since the clear revelation of the gospel, the ie/ of God doth not only extend to the pardon of n, ut to power against it; because this also is an effect f God's free grace and mercy to sinners, to enable them, y e grace of his holy Spirit, to master and mortify he lusts, and to persevere in goodness to the end.

nd it comprehends also our final pardon and absoluiorat the great day, together with the glorious reward f ernal life, which the Apostle expresseth, by finding ne y with the Lord in that day. And this likewise is rcised to repentance, Acts iii. 19. *Repent ye therefor and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, wh the times of refreshing shall come from the presence f e Lord, and he shall send Jesus Christ, who before was rched unto you;* that is, that when Jesus Christ, who s w preached unto you, shall come, you may receive h final sentence of absolution and forgiveness.

nd thus much shall suffice to have spoken of the blesin and benefit here promised, the mercy of God; v ch comprehends all the blessed effects of the divine gr e and goodness to sinners, the present pardon of in and power to mortify sin, and to persevere in a good o se, and our final absolution by the sentence of the gr t day, together with the merciful and glorious re- v d of eternal life.

. We will consider, in the next place, the condiis upon which this blessing is promised, and they are o, the confessing, and forsaking of our sins. *Whoso confesseth, and forsaketh his sin, shall have mercy;* and se two do contain and constitute the whole nature of entance, without which a sinner can have no reasone hopes to find mercy with God. I begin with the

First, The confession of our sins; by which is meant enitent acknowledgment of our faults to God; to d, I say, because the confession of sins to men is , generally speaking, a condition of the forgiveness them, but only in some particular cases, when our against God are accompanied and complicated with

scan-

scandal and injury to men. In other cases the c
sion of our sins to men is not necessary to the p
of them, as I shall more fully shew in the progr
this discourse.

All the difficulty in this matter is, that the conf
of our sins is opposed to the covering and conceali
them: *He that covereth his sin shall not prosper*
whoso confesseth them, shall have mercy. But no ma
hope to hide his sin from God; and therefore confe
of them to God cannot be here meant. But this ol
tion, if it be of any force, quite excludeth confe
to God, as no part of Solomon's meaning; when
confession of our sins to God is granted, on all hand
be a necessary condition of the forgiveness of th
And, to take away the whole ground of this object
men are said in scripture, when they do not confess t
sins and repent of them, to hide and conceal them f
God: not to acknowledge them, is as if a man wer
bout to cover them. And thus David opposeth cor
sion of sins to God, to the hiding of them. Psal. xx
5. *I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity h*
I not hid: I said I will confess my transgressions unto
Lord. So that this is no reason why the text should
be understood of the confessing of our sins to God.

But because the necessity of confessing our sins to m
that is, to the Priest, in order to the forgiveness of the
is a great point of difference between us and the chu
of Rome, it being by them esteemed a necessary arti
of faith, but by us, so far from being necessary to be b
lieved, that we do not believe it to be true; therefo
for the clear stating of this matter, I shall briefly enqu
into these two things.

1. Whether confession of our sins to the Priest,
taught and practised in the church of Rome, be necessa
to the forgiveness of them.

2. How far the disclosing and revealing of our si
to the ministers of God is convenient upon other a
counts, and for other purposes of religion.

I. Whether confession of our sins to the Priest, an
the manner in which it is taught and practised in th
church of Rome, be necessary to the forgiveness o
them. What manner of confession this is, the counc

of Trent hath most precisely determined, *viz.* "Secret "confession to the Priest alone of all and every mortal "sin, which, upon the most diligent search and exami- "nation of our consciences we can remember ourselves "to be guilty of since our baptism; together with all the "circumstances of those sins, which may change the na- "ture of them; because, without the perfect knowledge "of these, the Priest cannot make a judgment of the "nature and quality of mens sins, nor impose fitting "penance for them." This is the confession of sins required in the church of Rome, which the same council of Trent, without any real ground from scripture or ecclesiastical antiquity, doth most confidently affirm, "to "have been instituted by our Lord, and by the law of "God to be necessary to salvation, and to have been "always practised in the catholick church."

I shall as briefly as I can examine both these pretences, of the divine institution, and constant practice of this kind of confession.

1. For the divine institution of it, they mainly rely upon three texts; in the first of which there is no mention at all of confession, much less of a particular confession of all our sins, with the circumstances of them; in the other two there is no mention of confession to the Priests; and yet all this ought clearly to appear in these texts, before they can ground a divine institution upon them; for a divine institution is not to be founded upon obscure consequences, but upon plain words.

The first text, and the only one upon which the council of Trent grounds the necessity of confession, is John xx. 23. *Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained:* It is a sign they were at a great loss for a text to prove it, when they were glad to bring one that hath not one word in it concerning confession, nor the least intimation of the necessity of it.

But let us see how they manage it to their purpose. The Apostles and their successors, saith Bellarmine, by this power of remitting and retaining sins, are constituted judges of the case of penitents; but they cannot judge without hearing the cause, and this infers particu-

lar confession of sins to the Priest, from whence he c cludes it necessary to the forgiveness of sins.

But do not the ministers of the gospel exercise power of remitting sins in baptism? And yet parti lar confession of all sins to the Priest is not required, not in the church of Rome, in the baptism of adult p sons. And therefore, according to them, particular c fession of sin to the Priest is not necessary to his exer sing the power of remitting sins, and consequently t necessity of confession cannot be concluded from t text.

And to shew how they are puzzled in this matte Vasquez, by a strange device, concludes the necessity confession from the power of retaining sins; for, sa he, if the Priest have a power of retaining sins, that i of denying pardon and absolution to the penitent, the he may impose confession as a condition of forgivene and not absolve the penitent upon other terms. Bu supposing the Priest to have this unreasonable powe this makes confession no otherwise necessary by divin institution, than going to Jerusalem or China is, in or der to the forgiveness of our sins, or submitting to an other foolish condition that the Priest thinks fit to re quire; for, according to this way of reasoning, thi power of retaining sins, makes every foolish thing tha the Priest shall impose upon the penitent, to be necessa ry by divine command and institution.

But the truth is, this power of remitting and retain ing sins is exercised by the ministers of the gospel, in the administration of the sacraments, and the preaching of the gospel, which is called the word of reconciliation, the ministry whereof is committed to them. And thus the antient fathers understood it; and, as a great di vine told them in the council of Trent, it was perhaps never expounded by any one father concerning the bu siness of confession.

The second text they alledge to this purpose is, 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* Here indeed is confession; but ge neral, not particular, as appears by the opposition, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: but if we confess our sins,* that is, if we acknow-

acknowledge ourselves to have been sinners. And then there is not a word of confessing to the Priest; the confession here meant is plainly to God, because it follows, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; that is, God, who is necessarily understood in the former part of the sentence; as if it had run thus, *If we confess our sins to God, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

The third text is, James v. 16. *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another.* And here again there is only mention of confession, but not a word of the Priest; and, for another reason, if I had been to advise them, they should not have prest this text for their service in this cause, because it does them as much hurt as good; for it is certain the duty of confession here enjoined is reciprocal and mutual, confess your sins one to another: So that if by virtue of this text the people are bound to confess their sins to the Priest, the Priest is thereby as much obliged to confess his sins to the people; which, I dare say, is more than they have a mind to prove from this text. The plain meaning whereof is this, that as Christians should be ready to perform all mutual offices of charity, so to assist and comfort one another, by their counsel and prayers. And therefore the Apostle adviseth Christians, when they are sick, if at the same time they be under any spiritual trouble, by reason of the guilt of any sin lying upon their consciences, to lay open their case to one another, that so they may have the help of one another's advice and prayers; *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed,* both of your bodily and spiritual distemper. Not that the priest or minister is here excluded; St. James had spoken of that particular before, that when any was sick, he should send for the elders of the church, that he might, in the first place, have the benefit of their counsel and prayers; and then, because private Christians may also be useful to one another in this kind, he adds, that they should also lay open their condition and troubles to one another, that so they might have the help of one another's advice and prayers; and very probably all the confession here meant of private Christians to one another, is of the offences and injuries they may have been guilty of one towards ano-

ther; that they should be reconciled upon this occa and as a testimony of their charity, should *pray on another;* whereas they are bound *to send for the elde the church,* and they are *to pray over them,* as an act only of charity, but of superiority, and by virtue of t office in the church, a more special blessing being to expected from their prayers.

These three texts are the main arguments from scr ture, which they of the church of Rome bring to pro their auricular or secret confession to be of divine ins tution; and woful proofs they are: which shews wh miserable shifts they are reduced to, who resolve maintain a bad cause. I proceed in the

2. Place, to discover the falsehood of their other pr tences, that this kind of confession hath always bee practised in the catholick church; and not only so, b believed absolutely necessary to the remission of me sins, and their eternal salvation.

The truth of the whole matter is this; publick con fession and penance for open and scandalous crimes wa in use, and with great strictness observed in the first age of Christianity; and there was then no general law or cu stom, that exacted secret confession of sins to the Priest, as a necessary part of repentance, and condition of for giveness: afterward publick penance was by degrees disused; which plainly shews, that in the opinion of the church, this discipline, how useful soever, was not of absolute necessity to restore men to the favour of God.

In place of this came in private confession to the Priest, particularly appointed to this office, and called the penitentiary; but, upon occasion of a scandal that happened, this also was abrogated by Nectarius, bishop of Constantinople; which shews that neither was this necessary. And this act of Nectarius was justified by his successor St. Chrysostom, who does over and over most expressly teach, that confession of our sins to men is not necessary to the forgiveness of them, but that it is sufficient to confess them to God alone; so that St. Chrysostom does plainly stand condemned by the decrees of the council of Trent.

And

And thus for several ages the matter rested, till the degeneracy of the church of Rome growing towards its height, about the IX. and X. centuries, some began to contend for the necessity of secret confession; and this in the year 1215, in the IV. council of Lateran, under Pope Innocent III. was decreed and established.

And this is the first publick law that was made in the Christian church concerning this matter, notwithstanding all the boasts of the council of Trent, about the antiquity of this institution and practice; for Gratian, who lived about 50 years before this council, tells us, that in his time several wise and religious men were of the contrary opinion, and did not hold confession necessary by virtue of any divine law. Afterwards in the council of Florence, and especially in that of Trent, this decree of the council of Lateran was confirmed and enlarged in many particulars, of which I have already given some account.

And whereas they pretend for themselves the universal practice, not only of the past but present church, we are able to shew from clear testimony of their own writers, that confession, as taught and practised in the church of Rome, is no where else in use at this day, neither among the Abyssines, nor Indians of St. Thomas, nor the Nestorians, nor the Armenians, nor the Jacobites, churches of great antiquity and vast extent. And as for the Greek church, if we may believe Gratian, and the author of the gloss upon the canon law, the Greeks had anciently no tradition concerning the necessity of confession, nor do they at this day agree with the Roman church in all points concerning it.

So that, in short, there is no nation or church throughout the whole world, that bears the name of Christian, the Roman church only excepted, that doth fully embrace and maintain the whole doctrine of the council of Trent concerning confession; and yet, according to their principles, the whole is of equal necessity to be believed, as any part of it. With what face then do they declare, that this manner of confession always was, and still is observed in the catholick, that is, in the whole Christian church?

I have not time to ſhew the great and manifold conveniencies and miſchiefs of this practice: how ni nite a torture it is to the conſciences of men, by entan ling them in endleſs doubts and ſcruples; and how gre a ſcandal it is to the Chriſtian profeſſion, in the le management of it by the Prieſts, is evident from t two bulls of Pope Pius IV. and Gregory XV. whi mention things too ſhameful to be declared; not to i ſiſt upon other horrible abuſes of it to the vileſt a wickedeſt purpoſes; not ſo much to direct the conſcie ces of men, as to dive into their ſecrets, of which the are ſo many plain and notorious inſtances, that they a paſt denial.

The other thing pretended for it is, that it is a gre reſtraint upon men from ſin. And very probably it ſo to modeſt and well-diſpoſed perſons; but experien ſhews how quite contrary an effect it hath upon other who are the far greateſt part of mankind. Does not a the world ſee in the Popiſh countries, in the time their carnival, juſt before Lent, the anniverſary ſeaſo of confeſſion, how ſcandalous a liberty men take of do ing lewd and wicked things; and that for this very rea ſon, becauſe their conſciences are preſently to be eaſe and ſcoured, as they call it, by confeſſion and abſolu tion? And they therefore take the opportunity to gra tify their luſts, and fill up the meaſure of their iniquit at that time, becauſe with one labour they can ſet thei conſciences right, and clear them of all guilt. An they look upon this as a ſpecial piece of ſpiritual gooc huſbandry, to quit their ſcores with God at once, tha ſo they may have no occaſion to trouble him, nor th Prieſt, nor themſelves again for a good while after. So that confeſſion, inſtead of being a reſtraint from ſin, gives great encouragement to it, by deluding men into a vain hope of obtaining the pardon of their ſins from time to time, though they ſtill continue in the practice of them; by which device, mens ſins are at once remitted and retained; the Prieſt remits them by abſolution, and the penitent retains them, by going on ſtill in the commiſſion of them, in hope of obtaining a new abſolution as often as occaſion ſhall require. I proceed to the

II. En-

II. Enquiry, namely, How far the diſcloſing and revealing our ſins to the miniſters of God may be convenient upon other accounts, and to other purpoſes of religion? To which the anſwer is very plain and ſhort; as far as is neceſſary either to the direction, or the eaſe of mens conſciences.

There are many caſes wherein men, under the guilt and trouble of their ſins, can neither appeaſe their own minds, nor ſufficiently direct themſelves without recourſe to ſome pious and prudent guide: in theſe caſes, men certainly do very well, and many times prevent a great deal of trouble and perplexity to themſelves, by a timely diſcovery of their condition to ſome faithful miniſter, in order to their direction and ſatisfaction, without which they ſhall never perhaps be able to clear themſelves of the obſcurity and entanglement of their own minds, but by ſmothering their trouble in their own breaſt, ſhall proceed from one degree of melancholy to another, till at laſt they be plunged either into diſtraction or deſpair; whereas the diſcovery of their condition in time would prove a preſent and effectual remedy. And, to this purpoſe, a general confeſſion is for the moſt part ſufficient; and where there is occaſion for a more particular diſcovery, there is no need of raking into the particular and foul circumſtances of mens ſins, to give that advice which is neceſſary for the cure and eaſe of the penitent; a thing ſo far from being deſirable, that it muſt needs be very grievous to every modeſt and good man.

And thus far confeſſion is not only allowed, but encouraged among Proteſtants. In the Lutheran churches, Chemnitius tells us, that private general confeſſion is in uſe and practice. And Calvin freely declares, that he is ſo far from being againſt peoples repairing to their paſtors to this purpoſe, that he earneſtly wiſheth it were every where obſerved before the receiving of the ſacrament. And the ſame is the ſenſe of our own church, laying no neceſſity upon men in this matter, but adviſing, eſpecially before the ſacrament, thoſe who have any trouble upon their conſciences, to repair to ſome diſcreet and faithful miniſter of God's word, for advice and ſatisfaction. And thus all the good uſe which can

be

be made of confession may be had in our church, out the ill effects and consequences of the Romish c sion, and without laying a yoke upon the consc of men, which our Saviour never laid.

And now I have, as briefly and as plainly as I c stated this controversy between us and the churc Rome, concerning the necessity and use of secret fession to the ministers of God, as the proper guides directors of our consciences. But it is granted, on hands, that confession of our sins to God is necess and there is no doubt but it is here intended in the t *viz.* a penitent acknowledgment of our sins; the ture whereof I shall briefly explain to you.

And it must not only be a general confession that are sinners; but there must be a particular acknowle ment of our sins to God, so far as upon a particular cussion and examination of our consciences, we can them to remembrance; especially our most heinous si which our consciences will not suffer us to forget, m be particularly acknowledged, with the several aggr vations of them.

And this confession must be accompanied with such shame and sorrow for our sins, as produceth in us a si cere resolution to leave them, and to betake ourselves a better course. These are the principal ingredients a penitent confession.

1. There must be a shame, without which there no hope of amendment. Confession always supposet conviction of a fault; and he that is truly convince that he hath done amiss, cannot but be ashamed of wha he hath done. And thus the penitents in scripture were wont to make confession of their sins to God, Ezra ix. 6. *O my God,* says he, *I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God.* So Jer. chap. iii. 25. *We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against the Lord.* And so likewise, Dan. chap. ix. 5. *We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and done wickedly; unto us belongeth confusion of face.* And thus our Saviour describes the penitent behaviour of the publican, as ashamed to look up to that God whom he had offended, Luke xviii. 13. *He would not*

lift

t up so much as his eyes to heaven; but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

2. Confession must be always accompanied with great sorrow for our sins, considering the great dishonour we ve brought to God, and the danger into which we ve brought ourselves; *I will declare mine iniquity,* s David, *and I will be sorry for my sin.*

And this sorrow must be proportionable to the degree our sin. If we have been very wicked, and have sin- d greatly against the Lord, and *have multiplied our transgressions,* and continued long in an evil course, have glected God, and *forgotten him days without number,* e measure of our sorrow must bear some proportion the degree of our sins: if they have been as *scarlet d crimson,* as the Prophet expresseth it, that is, of a eper dye than ordinary, our sorrow must be as deep our guilt; for it is not a slight trouble and a few tears at will wash out such stains.

Not that tears are absolutely necessary, though they very well become, and most commonly accompany sincere repentance. All tempers are not in this alike; me cannot express their sorrow by tears, even then hen they are most inwardly and sensibly grieved. But we can easily shed tears upon other occasions, certain- rivers of tears ought to run down our eyes, because e have broken God's laws, the reasonable, and righte- s, and good laws of so good a God, of so gracious a overeign, of so mighty a benefactor, of the founder of r being, and the perpetual patron and protector of r lives: but if we cannot command our tears, there ust, however, be great trouble and contrition of spirit, pecially for great sins; to be sure to that degree, as produce the

3. Property I mentioned of a penitent confession, name- , a sincere resolution to leave our sins, and betake our- lves to a better course. He does not confess his fault, ut stand in it, who is not resolved to amend. True ame, and sorrow for our sins, is utterly inconsistent ith any thought of returning to them. It argues great bstinacy and impudence to confess a fault and continue it. Whenever we make confession of our sins to od, *surely it is meet to say unto him, I will not offend any more;*

more; that which I know not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

This is the first part of repentance mentioned in the text, the first condition of our finding mercy with God, the penitent acknowledgment of our sins to him. I proceed to the

Second condition required to make us capable of the mercy of God, which is the actual forsaking of our sins. *Whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.* I shall not go about to explain what is meant by forsaking sin, it is that which every body can understand, but few will do; there lies all the difficulty. I shall only put you in mind, that forsaking of sin comprehends our return to our duty, that necessarily follows from it. In sins of commission, he that hath left any vice, does thereby become master of the contrary virtue. *Virtus est vitium fugere;* not to be drunk, is to be sober; not to oppress, or defraud, or deal falsly, is to be just and honest: and for sins of omission, the forsaking of them is nothing else, but the doing of those duties which were omitted and neglected before. And therefore what Solomon here calls *forsaking of sin,* is elsewhere in scripture more fully expressed, by *ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well,* Isa. i. 16. By forsaking our sins, and turning to God, Isa. lv. 7. *Let the wicked man forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.* By turning from all our sins and keeping all God's laws and statutes, Ezek. xviii. 21. *If the wicked will turn from all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right.*

And this is a most essential part of repentance, and the necessary condition of our finding mercy with God. The part of repentance which I have mentioned and insisted upon before, the penitent acknowledgment of our sins to God, with shame and sorrow for them, and a firm purpose and resolution to leave them; all this is but preparatory to the actual forsaking of them: that which perfects and compleats repentance, is *to turn from our evil ways, and to break off our sins by righteousness.*

And

And these terms of confessing and forsaking our sins, are reasonable in themselves, and honourable to God, and profitable to us; and upon lower terms we have no reason to expect the mercy of God, nor in truth are we capable of it, either by the present forgiveness of our sins, or the final absolution of the great day, and the blessed reward of eternal life. God peremptorily requires this change, as a condition of our forgiveness and happiness; *repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out,* Acts iii. 19. *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,* Matth. xix. 17. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,* Heb. xii. 14. And why should any man hope for the mercy of God upon other terms than those which he hath so plainly and peremptorily declared.

It is a mean and unworthy thought of God, to imagine that he will accept men to his favour and eternal life upon other terms than of better obedience. Will any wise father or prince accept less from his children or subjects? Will they be satisfied with sighs and tears as well as with obedience; and well pleased if they be but melancholy for their faults, though they never mend them? We must not impute that to God, which would be a defect of wisdom and good government in any father or prince upon earth. God values no part of repentance upon any other account, but as it tends to reclaim us to our duty, and ends in our reformation and amendment.

This is that which qualifies us for the happiness of another life, and makes us meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. And, without this, though God should be pleased to forgive us, yet we could not forgive ourselves; and, notwithstanding the legal discharge from guilt, the sting of it would remain, and we should, like our first parents after they had sinned, run away and hide ourselves from God, though he spake never so kindly to us. God hath placed in every man's mind an inexorable judge, that will grant no pardon and forgiveness but to a reformed penitent, to him that hath such a sense of the evil of his past life, as to become a better man for the future.

And

And whoever entertains any other notion of the
and mercy of God to ſinners, confounds the natu
things, and does plainly overthrow the reaſon o
laws, which is to reſtrain men from ſin: but wher
committed, to pardon it without amendment, is t
courage the practice of it, and to take away the r
rence and veneration of thoſe laws, which ſeem ſofe
ly to forbid it. So that, next to impunity, the forg
neſs of mens ſins upon ſuch eaſy and unfit terms,
boldneſs and encouragement to ſin, and muſt neceſſa
in the opinion of men, leſſen the honour and eſteen
God's laws.

And thus I have conſidered and explained both
bleſſing and benefit which is here promiſed and decla
viz. the mercy and favour of God, which comprehe
both the preſent forgiveneſs of our ſins, and powe
gainſt them, and grace to perſevere in goodneſs to
end, and our final abſolution at the great day, and
glorious and merciful reward of eternal life; and li
wiſe the conditions upon which this bleſſing is promi
viz. the penitent acknowledgment of our ſins to G
with ſuch ſhame and ſorrow for them, as produceth
ſincere reſolution of leaving them, and returning t
better courſe, and the actual forſaking of them, which
volves in it our actual return to our duty, and a conſt
and ſincere obedience to the laws of God in the futu
courſe of our lives.

I ſhall now make ſome application of this diſcou
to ourſelves. I am ſure we are all nearly concerned
it. The beſt of us have many ſins to confeſs and forſak
ſome of us, very probably, have need to change t
whole courſe of our lives, to put us into a capacity
the mercy of God. This work can never be unſeaſo
able; but there cannot be a more proper time for i
than when we are ſolemnly preparing ourſelves to r
ceive the holy ſacrament; in which, as we do commem
rate the great mercy of God to mankind, ſo we do lik
wiſe renew and confirm our covenant with him, tha
holy covenant wherein we engage ourſelves to forſak
our ſins, as ever we expect the forgiveneſs of them a
God's hand.

To perſuade us hereto, be pleaſed to conſider the rea
ſonableneſs of the thing, the infinite benefit and advantag

f it; and, which is beyond all other arguments, the bſolute neceſſity of it, to make us capable of the mercy nd forgiveneſs of God, in this world and the other, and *deliver us from the wrath which is to come*, and from oſe terrible ſtorms of vengeance, which will infallibly all upon impenitent ſinners: ſo that we have all the eaſon, and all the encouragement in the world, to reolve upon a better courſe. Upon this condition, the ercy of God is ready to meet and embrace us; God ill pardon our greateſt provocations, and be perfectly econciled to us. So he hath declared by the Prophet, ſa. i. 16. *Waſh ye, make you clean, put away the evil of our doings from before mine eyes; ceaſe to do evil, learn o do well. Come now, and let us reaſon together, ſaith he Lord: though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as hite as ſnow; though they be red as crimſon, they ſhall e as wool.* And what greater encouragement can we deire, than that upon ſo eaſy and advantageous terms, God ſhould be ſo ready to have an end put to all conroverſies and quarrels between him and us?

I beſeech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, o take up a ſerious reſolution *to break off your ſins by reentance*, and to reform whatever, upon due ſearch and rial of your ways, you ſhall find to be amiſs in your ves.

I beſeech you, by the mercies of God, that mercy which aturally leads to repentance, and which is *long-ſuffering to us-ward*, on purpoſe that *we may not periſh, but ome to repentance*; which hath ſpared us ſo often, and s not yet exhauſted and tired out by our intolerable obtinacy, and innumerable provocations; that mercy which moved the Son of God to become man, to live among us, and to die for us: who now, as it were, ſpeaks o us from the croſs, extending his pierced hands, and ainful arms to embrace us, and through the gaſping wounds of his ſide let us ſee the tender and bleeding ompaſſion of his heart; that mercy, which, if we now ieſpiſe it, we ſhall in vain one day implore, and catch old of, and hang upon, to ſave us from ſinking into eernal perdition; that mercy, which, how much ſoever we now preſume upon, will then be ſo far from interpoing between us and the wrath of God, that it will high-

ly inflame and exasperate it. For whatever impenite sinners may now think, they will then certainly fi that the divine justice, when it is thoroughly provok and whetted by his abused mercy and goodness, will most terribly severe, and like a razor set with oil, w cut the keener for its smoothness.

Consider this, all ye that forget God, lest he tear you pieces, and there be none to deliver: Consider and sh yourselves men, O ye transgressors!

We do consider all this, may some perhaps say, b we have been great sinners, so great, that we dou whether our case be not already desperate.

This, if it be sensibly said, with deep sorrow and co trition, with that shame and confusion of face, whi becomes great offenders, is a good confession, and t best reason in the world, why ye should now *break o your sins:* for, if what you have already done, do real make your case so doubtful and difficult, do not, by si ning yet more and more against the Lord, make it qui desperate, and past remedy; do but you repent, and Go will yet *return and have mercy upon you.* And do not sa you cannot do it, when it must be done, or you are u done. Power and necessity go together: when men a hard pressed, they find a power which they thought the had not; and when it comes to the push, men can d that which they plainly see they either must do, or b ruined for ever.

But, after all this, I am very sensible how great a nee there is of God's powerful assistance in this case, an that it is not an ordinary resolution, and common mea sure of God's grace, that will reclaim those who hav been long habituated to an evil course.

Let us therefore earnestly beg of him, that he woul make these counsels effectual, that he would grant us re pentance unto life, that he would make us all sensible o our faults, sorry for them, and resolved to amend them and let us every one put up David's prayer to God fo ourselves. *Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy and teach me thy statutes. Order my steps in thy word, an let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, that I may keep them unt the end.*

I hav

I have now done; I am only to mind you of another duty, which is to accompany our repentance, and fasting, and prayer, as a testimony of the sincerity of our repentance, and one of the best means to make our fasting and prayer acceptable to God, and to turn away his judgments from us, and that is charity and alms to the poor, whose number is very great among us, and their necessities very pressing and clamorous; and therefore do call for a bountiful supply.

And, to convince men of the necessity of this duty, and the efficacy of it in conjunction with our repentance, and fasting, and prayers, I shall only offer to your consideration a few plain texts of scripture, which need no comment upon them, Dan. iv. 27. It is the Prophet's advice to Nebuchadnezzar; *Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquity by shewing mercy to the poor; if so be it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility.* Acts x. 4. The angel there tells Cornelius, *thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.* Isa. lviii. 5. *Is not this the fast which I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house; when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh? then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward: then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer thee: thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am.* To which I will only add that gracious promise of our Saviour; *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall find mercy;* and that terrible sentence in St. James, *He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.*

SERMON CLXI.

Of confeſſion and ſorrow for ſin.

PSAL. xxxviii. 18.

I will declare mine iniquity, and be ſorry for my ſin.

IN this pſalm David does earneſtly beg mercy an forgiveneſs of God, and in order to the obtainin of it, he declares both his ſins, and his repentanc for them in theſe words, which contain in them two c the neceſſary ingredients, or at leaſt concomitants of true repentance, *viz.* confeſſion of ſin, and ſorrow fo it.

I ſhall ſpeak ſomething of the firſt of theſe, *viz.* con feſſion of ſin: But the ſecond, *viz.* ſorrow for ſin, ſhal be the main ſubject of my diſcourſe.

Firſt, Confeſſion of ſin; *I will declare mine iniquity*, or, as it is in the old tranſlation, *I will confeſs my wickedneſs*. Of which I ſhall ſpeak under theſe three heads.

1. What confeſſion of ſin is.
2. How far it is neceſſary.
3. What are the reaſons and grounds of this neceſſity.

I. What confeſſion of ſin is. It is a declaration or acknowledgment of ſome moral evil or fault to another, which we are conſcious to ourſelves we have been guilty of. And this acknowledgment may be made by us, either to God or man. The ſcripture mentions both. Confeſſion of our ſins to God is very frequently mentioned in ſcripture, as the firſt and neceſſary part of repentance; and ſometimes, and in ſome caſes, confeſſion to men is not only recommended but enjoined.

II. How far confeſſion of our ſins is neceſſary. That it is neceſſary to confeſs our ſins to God, the ſcripture plainly declares, and is I think a matter out of all diſpute.

For

For it is a neceſſary part of repentance, that we ſhould confeſs our ſins to God, with a due ſenſe of the evil of them; and therefore the ſcripture maketh this a neceſſary qualification and condition of pardon and forgiveneſs. Prov. xxviii. 13. *Whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſins ſhall have mercy.* 1 John i. 9. *If we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs;* implying, that if we do not confeſs our ſins to God, the guilt of them will ſtill remain; to God, I ſay; for of confeſſion to him St. John plainly ſpeaks, when he ſays, *he is faithful and juſt.* Who? God ſurely; who, though he be not named before, yet is neceſſarily underſtood in the words before; *If we confeſs our ſins, i. e.* to God, *he is faithful and juſt.*

A general confeſſion of our ſins is abſolutely neceſſary; and, in ſome caſes, a particular acknowledgment of them, and repentance for them, eſpecially if the ſins have been great, and deliberate, and preſumptuous; in this caſe, a particular confeſſion of them, and repentance for them, is neceſſary, ſo far as we can particularly recollect them, and call them to remembrance: whereas, for ſins of ignorance and infirmity, of ſurprize and daily incurſion, for leſſer omiſſions, and the defects and imperfections of our beſt actions and ſervices, we have all the reaſon that can be to believe, that God will accept of a general confeſſion of them, and repentance for them. And, if any man aſk me, where I find this diſtinction in ſcripture, between a general and particular repentance; I anſwer, that it is not neceſſary it ſhould be any where expreſſed in ſcripture, being ſo clearly founded in the nature and reaſon of the thing; becauſe, in many caſes, it is not poſſible that we ſhould have a particular knowledge and remembrance of all our particular ſins; as is plain in ſins of ignorance, ſince our very calling them by that name does neceſſarily ſuppoſe that we do not know them. It is impoſſible we ſhould remember thoſe ſins afterwards, which we did not know when they were committed: and therefore either a general repentance for theſe and the other ſins I mentioned of the like nature, muſt be ſufficient, in order to the pardon of them; or we muſt ſay, that they are unpar-

donable, which would be very unreaſonable, becau this would be to make leſſer ſins more unpardonat than thoſe which are far greater.

And yet, though this difference between a gener and particular repentance be no where expreſly mentio ed in ſcripture, there does not want foundation for there. Pſal. xix. 12. *Who can underſtand his errors Cleanſe thou me from ſecret ſins, i. e.* ſuch as we do n diſcern and take notice of when they are committe And yet David ſuppoſeth, that upon a general acknow ledgment of them, and repentance for them, we ma be cleanſed from them, tho' we cannot make a partic lar acknowledgment of them, and exerciſe a partic lar repentance for them, becauſe they are ſecret, and w do not particularly underſtand what they are.

As for our confeſſing our ſins to men, both ſcriptur and reaſon do in ſome caſes recommend and enjoin it As,

1. In order to the obtaining of the prayers of goo men for us. James v. 16. *Confeſs your ſins one to ano ther;* he ſaid before, *the prayer of faith ſhall ſave th ſick, and the Lord ſhall raiſe him up.* This in all proba bility is meant of the miraculous power of prayer, whic St. Chryſoſtom reckons among the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, beſtowed upon Chriſtians in the firſt ages of the church: and this is very much countenanced and confirmed by what preſently follows after th's command o confeſſing our ſins to one another, and praying one for another, and given as the reaſon of it; for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. The original is δέησις ἐνεργουμένη, "the inſpired prayer," which in the verſe before is called the prayer of faith; meaning that miraculous faith, in the power whereof Chriſtians did obtain of God whatever they were inſpired to aſk of him; according to our Saviour's promiſe in the goſpel, concerning the efficacy of the prayers of Chriſtians, which we find mentioned among the other miraculous powers which were to be conferred upon them by the coming of the Holy Ghoſt.

2. Confeſſion of our ſins to men is likewiſe reaſonable, in order to the eaſe and ſatisfaction of our minds, and our being directed in our duty for the future. In this caſe common-

ommon reason and prudence, without any precept of ripture, will direct men to have recourse to this reme. y, *viz.* to discover and lay open our disease to some kilful spiritual physician, to some faithful friend or pru- ent guide, in order to spiritual advice and direction, for he peace and satisfaction of our minds. And then,

3. In case our sins have been publick and scandalous, both reason and the practice of the Christian church do equire, that when men have publickly offended, they hould give publick satisfaction, and open testimony of heir repentance.

But as for private and auricular confession of our sins o a Priest in all cases, and as of absolute necessity to our obtaining pardon and forgiveness from God, as the church of Rome teacheth, this is neither necessary by divine precept, nor by any constitution and practice of the antient Christian church, as I have shewn in my former discourse.

Not to mention the bad consequence of this practice, and the impious and dangerous use which hath been made of this seal of confession, for the concealing and carry- ing on of the most wicked and barbarous designs, and the debauching of the penitents, by drawing them into the commission of the same and greater sins than those which they confessed, which the more devout persons of that church have frequently complained of; I proceed now to shew briefly, in the

III. Place, the grounds and reasons of the necessity of confessing our sins to God; and I shall but just men- tion them.

1. From the precept and command of God; for which I have already produced clear proof of scripture.

2. From the nature of the thing, because, without this, there can be no repentance towards God. He that will not so much as own the faults which he hath been guilty of, can never repent of them. If we will not confess our sins to God, we are never like to be sorry for them. Thus much for the first thing in the text, the confession of our sins. I proceed now to the

Second ingredient of repentance mentioned in the text, which is sorrow for sin; *I will declare mine iniquity, and be sorry for my sin.* In the handling of this argument, I shall,

1. Con-

1. Consider the nature of this passion of sorrow
2. The reason and grounds of our sorrow for sin
3. The measure and degrees of it.
4. How far the outward expression of our inward g by tears is necessary to a true repentance.

I. For the nature of this passion. Sorrow is a t ble or disturbance of mind, occasioned by something t is evil, done or suffered by us, or which we are in dan of suffering, that tends greatly to our damage or i chief; so that, to be sorry for a thing, is nothing but to be sensibly affected with the consideration of evil of it, and of the mischief and inconvenience wh is like to redound to us from it: which if it be a mo evil, such as sin is, to be sorry for it, is to be troub that we have done it, and to wish, with all our hear that we had been wiser, and had done otherwise; a if this sorrow be true and real, if it abide and stay up us, it will produce a firm purpose and resolution in not to do the like for the future.

It is true, indeed, that we are said to be sorry for t death and loss of friends; but this is rather the effect natural affection than of our reason, which always e deavours to check and moderate our grief for that whi we cannot help, and labours, by all means, to tu our sorrow into patience: and we are said likewise t grieve for the miseries and sufferings of others; but th is not so properly sorrow as pity and compassion. So row rather respects ourselves, and our own doings an sufferings. I proceed, in the

II. Place, to enquire into the reasons and grounds o our sorrow for sin; and they, as I have already hinted are these two, the intrinsical, or the consequent evil o sin; either the evil of sin in itself, or the mischiefs an inconveniencies which it will bring upon us. For every one that is sorry for any fault he is guilty of, is so upon one of these two accounts; either upon the score of ingenuity, or of interest; either because he hath done a thing which is unworthy in itself, or because he hath done something which may prove prejudicial to himself; either out of a principle of love and gratitude to God, or from a principle of self-love. And though the former of these be the better, the more generous

nous principle of sorrow; yet the latter is usually the
fi; because it is the more sensible, and toucheth us
ire nearly: for sin is a base and ill-natured thing, and
riders a man not so apt to be affected with the injur-
y he hath offered to God, as with the mischief which
likely to fall upon himself. And therefore I will be-
g with the latter, because it is usually the more sen-
ble cause of our trouble and sorrow for sin.

1. The great mischief and inconvenience that sin is
le to bring upon us. When a man is throughly con-
nced of the danger into which his sins have brought
n, that they have made him a child of wrath, and a
n of perdition, that he is thereby fallen under the heavy
displeasure of almighty God, and liable to all those
eadful curses which are written in his book, that ruin
d destruction hang over him, and that nothing keeps
m from eternal and intolerable torments, but the pa-
ence and long-suffering of God, which he does not
now how soon it may cease to interpose between him
d the wrath of God, and let him fall into that end-
ss and insupportable misery, which is the just por-
on and desert of his sins; he that lays to heart the sad
tate and condition into which he hath brought him-
lf by sin, and the mischiefs which attend him every
oment of his continuance in that state, and how near
ney are to him, and that there is but a step between
im and death, and hardly another between that and
ell, he cannot surely but be very sorry for what he hath
one, and be highly displeased and offended with himself,
hat he should be the author of his own ruin, and have
ontributed as much as in him lies to his everlasting un-
doing.

2. Another and better principle of sorrow for sin is
ingenuity; because we are sensible, that we have carried
ourselves very unworthily towards God, and have been
injurious to him, who hath laid all possible obligations
upon us: for he hath made us, and hath given us our
beings, and hath charged his watchful providence with
the continual care of us; his bounty hath ministered to
the necessities and comforts of our life; all the blessings
that we enjoy are the effects of his mere love and good-
ness, without any hope of requital, or expectation of
any

any other return from us, than of love, of grat and obedience; which yet are of no advantage to but very beneficial and comfortable to ourselves: does not expect duty and obedience from us, wit regard of benefit to himself, but for our sakes, a order to our own happiness.

Nay, his kindness did not stop here, but after had abused him by our repeated provocations, yet he continued his care of us; and when we had farther voked him to withdraw his love, and to call in his ed goodness, and had done what lay in us to make selves miserable, he would not suffer us to be und but found out a ransom for us, and hath contriv way for the pardon of all our offences, and to recon us to himself, and to restore us to happiness, by most stupendous and amazing condescension of love goodness that ever was, even by giving his only Son die for us.

And can we reflect upon all this, and not be so and grieved at our very hearts, that we should be so vil to him, who hath been so good to us; that we sho be so undutiful to so loving a father, so unkind to faithful and constant a friend, so ungrateful and unw thy to so mighty a benefactor? If any thing will m us into tears, surely this will do it, to consider that have sinned against him who made us, and continual preserves us, and after all our unkindness to him, d still retain so great a love for us, as to redeem us fro hell and destruction, by the death and suffering of Son, and, notwithstanding all our offences, does sti offer us pardon and peace, life and happiness. Such co siderations as these, seriously laid to heart, should, o would think, break the hardest heart, and make tea to gush even out of a rock. I proceed, in the

III. Place, to consider the measure and degree of ou sorrow for sin. That it admits of degrees, which ough to bear some proportion to the heinousness of our sins and the several aggravations of them, and the time o our continuance in them, is out of all dispute: for, though the least sin be a just cause of the deepest sorrow; yet because our greatest grief can never bear a due proportion to the vast and infinite evil of sin, God is pleased

to

to require and accept such measures of sorrow, as do not bear an exact correspondence to the malignity of sin, provided they be according to the capacity of our nature, and in some sort proportioned to the degree and aggravations of our sins, *i. e.* Though the highest degree of our sorrow doth necessarily fall below the evil of the least sin; yet God requires that we should be more deeply affected with some sins than others.

But what is the lowest degree which God requires in a true penitent, and will accept, as it is impossible for men to tell, so it is unprofitable for any body to know: for no man can reasonably make this inquiry with any other design, than that he may learn how he may come off with God upon the cheapest and easiest terms. Now, there cannot be a worse sign that a man is not truly sensible of the great evil of sin, than this, that he desires to be troubled for it as little as may be, and no longer than needs must: and none surely are more unlikely to find acceptance with God, than those who deal so nearly, and endeavour to drive so hard a bargain with him.

And therefore I shall only say this in general, concerning the degrees of our sorrow for sin, that sin being so great an evil in itself, and of so pernicious a consequence to us, it cannot be too much lamented and grieved for by us: and the more and greater our sins have been, and the longer we have continued and lived in them, they call for so much the greater sorrow, and deeper humiliation from us: for the reasoning of our Saviour, concerning Mary Magdalen, *She loved much, because much was forgiven her*, is proportionably true in this case, those who have sinned much, should sorrow the more.

And then we must take this caution along with us, that if we would judge aright of the truth of our sorrow for sin, we must not measure it so much by the degrees of sensible trouble and affliction, as by the rational effects of it, which are hatred of sin, and a fixed purpose and resolution against it for the future: for he is most truly sorry for his miscarriage, who looks upon what he hath done amiss with abhorrence and detestation of the thing, and wisheth he had not done it, and censures himself severely for it; and thereupon resolves not to do the like

like again. And this is the character which St. Paul
of a godly sorrow, 2 Cor. vii. 10. that *it worketh r*
tance, μετάνοιαν, it produceth *a real change in our m*
and makes us to alter our purpose and resolution:
though such a person may not be so passionately and
sibly afflicted for sin, yet it appears by the effect,
he hath a deeper and more rational resentment of
evil of it, than that man who is sad and melancholy
drooping for never so long a time, and after all ret
to his former sinful course; the degree of his sorrow r
appear greater, but the effect of it is really less.

IV. As for the outward expressions of our grief
sorrow. The usual sign and outward expression of
row is tears; but these being not the substance of
duty, but an external testimony of it, which some te
pers are more unapt to than others; we are much less
judge of the truth of our sorrow for sin by these, th
by our inward sensible trouble and affliction of spi
Some persons are of a more tender and melting dispos
on, and can command their tears upon a little occasio
and upon very short warning; and such persons th
can weep for every thing else that troubles them, hav
much more reason to suspect the truth of their sorro
for sin, if this outward expression of it be wanting. A
we find in scripture, that the sorrow of true penitenc
does very frequently discover itself by this outward sig
of it. Thus, when Ezra and the people made confessio
of their sins to God, it is said, that *they wept very sor*
Ezra x. Peter, when he reflected upon that great sin o
denying his master, it is said, *He went forth and wept bi*
terly. David also was abundant in this expression of hi
grief. In the book of psalms he speaks frequently of hi
sighs and groans, and of watering his couch with hi
tears; yea, so sensibly was he affected with the evil o
sin, that he could shed tears plentifuly for the sins of o
thers. Psal. cxix. 136. *Rivers of waters run down min*
eyes, because men keep not thy law. In like maner Jeremi
ah tells us, that *his soul did weep in secret places, for the*
pride and obstinacy of the Jews; that his eye did weep sore,
and run down with tears, Jer. xiii. 17. And so likewise
St. Paul, Phil. iii. 18. 19. *There are many that walk, of*
whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weep-
ing,

, that they are enemies even to the cross of Christ. And ere seems to be this natural reason for it, that all great d permanent impressions upon the mind, all deep in- ard resentments, have usually a proportionable effect on the body, and the inferior faculties.

But though this happen very frequently, yet it is not constant and certain: for all men have not the same nderness of spirit, nor are equally prone to tears; nay, ough a man can weep upon natural accounts, as upon e loss of a child, or near relation, or an intimate friend, r when he lies under a sharp bodily pain, yet a man ay truly repent, though he cannot express his sorrow r sin the same way, provided he give testimony of it y more real effects: and therefore the rule, which is ommonly given by casuists in this case, seems to be ore ensnaring than true and useful; namely, "That that man that can shed tears upon account of any evil less than that of sin, as certainly all natural evils are, ought to question the truth of his repentance for any sin that he hath committed, if he cannot shed tears for it." This, I think, is not true, because there is scarce ny man of so hard and unrelenting a spirit, but the loss f a kind father, or a dear child, or other near relation, vill force tears from him: and yet such a man, if it were o save his soul, may not be able, at some times, to shed tear for his sins. And the reason is obvious; because ears do proceed from a sensitive trouble, and are com- nonly the product of a natural affection; and therefore t is no wonder if they flow more readily and easily up- n a natural account; because they are the effect of a ause suitable to their nature. But sorrow for sin, which ath more of the judgment and understanding in it, hath ot its foundation in natural affection, but in reason; and herefore may not many times express itself in tears, ho' it may produce greater and more proper effects.

So that, upon the whole matter, I see no reason to all in question the truth and sincerity of that man's orrow and repentance, who hates sin, and forsakes it, nd returns to God and his duty, though he cannot shed tears, and express the bitterness of his soul for his sin, by the same significations that a mother doth in the loss of her only son. He that cannot weep like a child, may

resolve like a man, and that undoubtedly will sinc
ceptance with God. A learned divine hath well illu
ted this matter by this similitude. Two persons w
ing together espy a serpent, the one shrieks and
out at the sight of it, the other kills it: so is it in
row for sin; some express it by great lamentation
tears, and vehement transports of passion; others,
greater and more real effects of hatred and detestat
by forsaking their sins, and by mortifying and subd
their lusts: but he that kills it does certainly best
press his inward displeasure and enmity against it.

The application I shall make of what hath been
upon this argument shall be in two particulars.

I. By way of caution, and that against a double n
take about sorrow for sin.

1. Some look upon trouble and sorrow for sin, as
whole of repentance.

2. Others exact from themselves such a degree of s
row, as ends in melancholy, and renders them un
both for the duties of religion, and of their particul
calling. The first concerns almost the generality
men; the latter but a very few in comparison.

1*st*, There are a great many who look upon troub
and sorrow for their sins, as the whole of repentanc
whereas it is but an introduction to it. It is that whi
works repentance; but is not repentance itself. R
pentance is always accompanied with sorrow for sin
but sorrow for sin does not always end in true reper
tance: sorrow only respects sins past; but repentance
chiefly preventive of sin for the future. And God dot
therefore require our sorrow for sin, in order to our for
saking of it. Heb. vi. 1. Repentance is there called *re
pentance from dead works.* It is not only a sorrow for
them, but a turning from them.

There is no reason why men should be so willing t
deceive themselves; for they are like to be the loser
by it: but so we see it is, that many men are contented
to be deceived to their own ruin; and among many o-
ther ways, which men have to cheat themselves, this is
none of the least frequent, to think that if they can but
shed a few tears for sin upon a death bed, which, no
doubt, they may easily do, when they see their friends

weep-

weeping about them, and apprehend themselves to be in imminent danger, not only of death, but of that which is more terrible, the heavy displeasure, and the fiery indignation of almighty God, *into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall:* I say, they think that if they can but do thus much, God will accept this for a true repentance, and hereupon grant them pardon and eternal life. And upon these fond hopes, they adjourn their repentance, and the reformation of their lives to a dying hour.

Indeed, if I were to speak to a man upon his deathbed, I would encourage him to a great contrition and sorrow for his sins, as his last and only remedy, and the best thing he can do at that time; but on the other hand, when I am speaking to those that are well and in health, I dare not give them the least encouragement to venture their souls upon this, because it is an hazardous, and almost desperate remedy; especially when men have cunningly and designedly contrived to rob God of the service of their lives, and to put him off with a few unprofitable sighs and tears at their departure out of the world. Our Saviour tells us, that it is *not every one that shall say unto him, Lord! Lord! that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;* and that there is a time when *many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able.*

The sum of this caution is, that men should take heed of mistaking sorrow for sin for true repentance, unless it be followed with the forsaking of sin, and the real reformation of our lives. Ahab humbled himself, but we do not find that he was a true penitent. Judas was sorry for his sin, and yet, for all that, was *the son of perdition.* Esau is a sad type of an ineffectual sorrow for sin, Heb. xii. where the Apostle tells us, that *he found no place for repentance*, that is, no way to change the mind of his father Isaac, *though he sought it carefully with tears.* If sorrow for sin were repentance, there would be store of penitents in hell; for there is the deepest and most intense sorrow, *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.*

2. Another mistake which men ought to be cautioned against in this matter, is of those who exact from themselves such a degree of sorrow for sin, as ends in

deep melancholy, as renders them unfit both for the ties of religion, and of their particular callings. B because there are but very few who fall into this stake, I shall need to say the less to it. This onl shall say, that those who indulge their sorrow to suc degree, as to drown their spirits, and to sink them in melancholy and mopishness, and thereby render the selves unserviceable to God, and unfit for the necessit of this life, they commit one sin more to mourn f and overthrow the end of repentance by the indiscre use of the means of it. For the end of sorrow for s is the forsaking of it, and returning to our duty: b he that sorrows for sin, so as to unfit him for his dut defeats his own design, and destroys the end he aims a

II. The other part of the application of this discour should be, to stir up this affection of sorrow in us. An here, if I had time, I might represent to you the grea evil of sin, and the infinite danger and inconvenience o it. If the holy men in scripture, David, and Jeremiah and St. Paul, were so deeply affected with the sins o others, as to shed *rivers of tears* at the remembranc of them; how ought we to be touched with the sens of our own sins, who are equally concerned in the dis honour brought to God by them, and infinitely more in the danger they expose us to! Can we weep for our dead friends? And have we no sense of that heavy load of guilt, of that *body of death*, which we carry about with us? Can we be sad and melancholy for temporal losses and sufferings, and *refuse to be comforted?* And is it no trouble to us to have lost heaven and happiness, and to be in continual danger of the intolerable sufferings and endless torments of another world?

I shall only offer to your consideration the great benefit and advantage which will redound to us from this *godly sorrow; it worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of*, saith St. Paul. If we would thus *sow in tears*, we should *reap in joy*. This sorrow would but continue for a time, and in the morning of the resurrection there would be joy to all eternity, *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*. It is but a very little while, and these *days of mourning will be accomplished*; and then all

tears

tears shall be wiped from your eyes; and the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted: but woe unto you that laugh, for ye shall mourn and weep. If men will rejoice in the pleasures of sin, *and walk in the ways of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes;* if they will remove *sorrow from their heart,* and put away all sad and melancholy thoughts from them, and are resolved to harden their spirits against the sense of sin, against the checks and convictions of their own consciences, and the suggestions of God's holy Spirit, against all the arguments that God can offer, and all the methods that God can use to bring them to repentance; let them *know, but, for all these things, God will bring them into judgment;* and because they would not give way to a timely and seasonable sorrow for sin, they shall *lie down* in eternal *sorrow; weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth shall be their portion for ever.* From which sad and miserable estate, beyond all imagination, and past all remedy, God of his infinite goodness deliver us all, for Jesus Christ his sake.

To whom, &c.

SERMON CLXII.

The unprofitableneſs of ſin in this life, an argument for repentance.

Preached on Aſh-Wedneſday, 1689.

JOB xxxiii. 27. 28.

He looketh upon men, and if any ſay, I have ſinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his ſoul from going into the pit, and his life ſhall ſee the light.

THE great folly and perverſeneſs of human nature is in nothing more apparent than in that when in all other things men are generally led and governed by their intereſts, and can hardly be impoſed upon by any art, or perſuaded by any ſolicitation, to act plainly contrary to it; yet, in matter of their ſin and duty, that is, in that which of all other is of greateſt concernment to them, they have little or no regard to it; but are ſo blinded and bewitched with the deceitfulneſs of ſin, as not to conſider the infinite danger and diſadvantage of it: and, at the ſame time, to caſt the commandments of God, and the conſideration of their own happineſs, behind their backs.

And of this every ſinner, when he comes to himſelf and conſiders what he hath done, is abundantly convinced; as appears by the confeſſion and acknowledgment which is here in the text put into the mouth of a true penitent; *I have ſinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not*, &c.

In which words here is a great bleſſing and benefit promiſed on God's part, and a condition required on our part.

Firſt, The bleſſing or benefit promiſed on God's part which is deliverance from the ill conſequences and puniſh

niment of ſin; *he will deliver his ſoul from going into the pit, and his life ſhall ſee the light*; that is, he will deliver him from death and damnation. And though perhaps temporal death be here immediately intended, yet that is a type of our deliverance from eternal death; which is expreſly promiſed in the goſpel.

Secondly, Here is a condition required on our part; *if any ſay, I have ſinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not.* In which words there are contained,

I. A penitent confeſſion of our ſins to God; for *he looketh upon men, and if any ſay, I have ſinned*, that is, make a penitent confeſſion of his ſin to God.

II. A true contrition for our ſin, not only for fear of the pernicious conſequences of ſin, and the puniſhment that will follow it, implied in theſe words, *and it profited me not*, this is but a very imperfect contrition; but from a juſt ſenſe of the evil nature of ſin, and the fault and offence of it againſt God, that we have done contrary to right and our duty. *If any ſay, I have ſinned, and perverted that which was right.* Here you ſee that true and perfect contrition for our ſins, is made a neceſſary condition of the bleſſing and benefit here promiſed, *viz.* deliverance from the puniſhment due to them.

III. Here is a deſcription of the evil nature of ſin; it is *a perverting of that which is right.* Sin is a perverting of the conſtitution and appointment of God, and of the nature and order of things. God hath given man a law and rule to walk by, but *the fooliſhneſs of man perverteth his way.* The great lines of our duty are plain and viſible to all men; and if we would attend to the direction of our own minds, concerning good and evil, every man would be *a law to himſelf. He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good.* That which is right, and juſt, and good, is plain and obvious, and offers itſelf firſt to us; and whenever we ſin, we go out of the right way that lies plain before us, and *turn aſide into crooked paths.* But when we do that which is right, we act agreeably to the deſign and frame of our beings, and comply with the true nature and order of things; we do what becomes us, and are what we ought to be: but ſin perverts the

nature

nature of things, and puts them out of courſe; *I ſinned, and perverted that which was right.*

IV. You have here an acknowledgment of the chievous and pernicious conſequences of ſin; *I ſinned and perverted that which was right, and it p ed me not.* Which laſt words are a μείωσις, in w much leſs is ſaid than is meant and intended; *It pro me not*, that is, was ſo far from being of advantage, the effects and conſequences of it were very pernic and deſtructive.

And this is not only true as to the final iſſue, an vent of an evil courſe in the other world; but I ſ endeavour to ſhew, that even in reſpect of this wo and the preſent life, the practice of ſome ſins is plai miſchievous to the temporal intereſts of men, that thers are wholly unprofitable; and that thoſe which p tend to bring ſome benefit and advantage, will, when accounts are caſt up, and all circumſtances duly wei ed and conſidered, be found to do far otherwiſe.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew, that the practice of ſome vice evidently miſchievous, and prejudicial to us, as to t world; as all thoſe vices which fall under the cognizar of human laws, and are puniſhed by them, murder, the perjury, ſedition, rebellion, and the like; theſe cann be denied to be of pernicious conſequence to men; a therefore the great patrons of vice ſeldom plead f theſe, the inconvenience of them is ſo palpable, th ſome feel it, and all may ſee it every day.

But, beſides theſe, there are many other ſorts of ſi which human laws either take no notice of, or do not ſ ſeverely puniſh, which yet in their natural conſequence are very pernicious to our preſent intereſt; either the are a diſturbance to our minds, or dangerous to ou health, or ruinous to our eſtate, or hurtful to our repu tation, or it may be at once prejudicial to us in all, o moſt of theſe reſpects; and theſe are the greateſt tem poral inconveniencies that men are liable to.

All irregular paſſions, as wrath, malice, envy, impatience, and revenge, are not only a diſturbance to ourſelves, but they naturally draw upon us hatred and contempt from others. Any one of theſe paſſions is enough to render a man uneaſy to himſelf, and to make his con-

ver-

vation diſguſtful and troubleſome to all that are about him: for all men naturally hate all thoſe who are of a envious, or malicious, or revengeful temper, and are at to riſe up and ſtand upon their guard againſt them. ger and impatience are great deformities of the mind, d make a man look as ugly, as if he had a wry and torted countenance; and theſe paſſions are apt to breed others a ſecret contempt of us, and to bring our prunce into queſtion, becauſe they are ſigns of a weak d impotent mind, that either hath loſt, or never had e government of itſelf.

There are other vices which are plainly pernicious to r health, and do naturally bring pains and diſeaſes up- men; ſuch are intemperance and luſt: and though me may pretend to govern themſelves, in the practice theſe, with ſo much moderation and diſcretion, as to event the notorious bad conſequences of them, yet ere are very few or none that do ſo: this is ſeldom ore than a ſpeculation, and men that allow themſelves any lewd or intemperate courſe, will find it very hard govern themſelves in it; for, after men have forfeited their innocence, and broke in upon their natural moeſty, they are apt, by degrees, to grow profligate and eſperate. If a man gives way but little to his own itious inclinations, they will ſoon get head of him, and o man knows how far they will hurry him at laſt.

Beſides, that the vices I am ſpeaking of, intemperance nd luſt, have other great inconveniencies attending hem, they expoſe men more frequently than moſt oher vices, to occaſions of quarrel, in which men often oſe their own lives, or take away other mens, by which hey fall under the danger of the law, and the ſtroke of ublick juſtice; or, if they eſcape that, as too often hey do, they cannot fly from their own conſciences, vhich do commonly fill them with the horror and torment of ſuch an action all their days; ſo pernicious are he uſual conſequences of theſe vices, of which we ſee ad inſtances every day.

Nor are theſe vices leſs hurtful to mens eſtates; for they are extremely expenſive and waſteful, and uſually make men careleſs of all their buſineſs and concernments,

ments, liable to be cheated by thoſe whom they ar
ced to truſt with their affairs, becauſe they will
mind themſelves, and to be abuſed by crafty
who watch the opportunities of their folly and weak
to draw them into fooliſh bargains. It is an old o
vation, that more men periſh by intemperance, tha
the ſword; and I believe it is as true, that more eſt
are diſſipated and waſted by theſe two riotous v
than by all other accidents whatſoever.

And there is ſcarce any notorious vice, by which
do not greatly ſuffer in their reputation and good na
even when the times are worſt and moſt degener
any wicked courſe, whether of debauchery or injuſt
is a blemiſh to a man's credit, not only in the eſte
of the ſober and virtuous, but even of thoſe who are lo
and extravagant; for men are ſooner brought to pr
tiſe what is bad, than to approve of it, and do genera
think all ſin and wickedneſs to be a ſtain upon the
whatever in a ſwaggering humour they may ſay to
contrary. A clear evidence of this is, that men do
ſtudiouſly endeavour to conceal their vices, and are
careful that as few as may be ſhould be conſcious
them, and are ſo confounded if they be diſcovered, and
out of all patience when they are upbraided with the
a plain acknowledgment, that theſe things are ſham
ful in themſelves, and whatever face men may put up
things, that they do inwardly, and at the bottom
their hearts, believe that theſe practices are deſerved
of bad reputation, and do, in the general opinion
mankind, leave a blot upon them.

Secondly, There are other ſins, which though the
are not uſually attended with conſequences ſo palpabl
miſchievous, yet are plainly unprofitable, and bring n
manner of advantage to men.

Of this ſort is all kind of prophaneneſs, and cuſtomar
ſwearing in common converſation; there is neither pro
fit nor pleaſure in them. What doth the prophane ma
get by his contempt of religion; he is neither mor
reſpected nor better truſted for this quality; but, on th
contrary, it is many times really to his prejudice, and
brings a great odium upon him, not only from thoſe
who ſincerely love religion, but from others alſo; though
they

tly are conſcious to themſelves that they do not love r gion as they ought, yet they have a veneration for it and cannot endure that any one ſhould ſpeak ſlightly oit.

And it is as hard to imagine where the pleaſure of pphaneneſs lies. Men cannot but, at firſt, have a great ructancy in their minds againſt it, and muſt offer conſerable violence to themſelves, to bring themſelves to i and when it is grown more familiar, and their own ciciences are become more ſeared and inſenſible; yet, nenever they are alone, and ſerious, or when any afſtion or calamity is upon them, they are full of fears d anguiſh, their guilt ſtares them in the face, and their nſciences are raging and furious.

And as all kind of prophaneneſs is unprofitable, ſo ore eſpecially cuſtomary ſwearing in ordinary converion upon every occaſion of paſſion, or any other trivial uſe, nay, it may be without cauſe, out of mere habit d cuſtom. Now, what can poſſibly be imagined to be e profit or pleaſure of this vice? Senſual pleaſure in it ere can be none, becauſe it is not founded in the temr of the body; a man may be naturally prone to anr or luſt; but no man, I think, is born with a ſwearig conſtitution.

And there is as little profit as pleaſure in it; for the mmon and trivial uſe of oaths makes them perfectly ſignificant to their end, and is ſo far from giving credit a man's word, that it rather weakens the reputation it.

Thirdly, Thoſe vices which pretend to be of advange to us, when all accounts are caſt up, and all cirmſtances duly conſidered, will be found to be quite herwiſe. Some vices pretend to bring in profit, others yield pleaſure; but, upon a through examination of e matter, theſe pretences will vaniſh, and come to othing.

The vices which pretend to be moſt profitable are ovetouſneſs and oppreſſion, fraud and falſhood, and erfidiouſneſs: but, if we look well into them, we ſhall ind that either they do not bring the advantages they retend to bring; or that the inconveniencies which atend them are as great, or greater, than the advantages

they

they bring: or elſe that the practice of the oppoſit tues would be of much greater advantage to us.

1. Some of theſe vices do not bring the advan they pretend to do. Covetouſneſs may increaſe a eſtate, but it adds nothing to his happineſs and con ment; for, though his eſtate grow never ſo much want is ſtill as great as it was before, and his care trouble continually greater; ſo that, ſo long as he tinues covetous, the more rich, the leſs happy.

And then for fraud and falſhood; they are not of real and laſting advantage, that cunning but ſhort-ſi ed men are apt to imagine. Nothing is truer than of Solomon, *The lying tongue is but for a moment.* man can practiſe the arts of falſhood and deceit bu a little while, before they will be diſcovered; and w they are diſcovered, they are ſo far from being any vantage to him, that they turn to his prejudice, the cunning man begins to be in a bad caſe, and that was wont to over-reach others, is at laſt ca himſelf.

2. Several of theſe vices are attended with inco niencies, as great, or greater, than the advantages t bring. If a man increaſe his eſtate by injuſtice and preſſion, yet he loſeth his reputation. Beſides that fraudulent and unjuſt courſes are apt to entangle a m in a great many inconveniencies, and to expoſe him troubleſome ſuits, for the keeping of what he hath juſtly gotten, it is very often ſeen, that what is got by injuſtice is ſpent in law; and though it may be th whom he hath wronged never recover their right, firſt or laſt the unjuſt man is put to more trouble a vexation about it than the thing is worth. This Sol mon obſerves, Prov. xv. 16. *In the revenue of the wic ed there is trouble.*

The perfidious man, by betraying a friend or a tr may, perhaps, make ſome preſent advantage: but the by ſuch a villainy, he makes himſelf odious to all ma kind, and, by this means, at one time or other, pr vents himſelf of greater advantages which he might ha had another way; and perhaps at laſt is miſerably cruſ ed by thoſe whom he betrayed, who, in the change ar

revolution of human affairs, may, some time or other, have the opportunity of being revenged. Or else,

3. The practice of the opposite virtues would be of far greater advantage to us.

Truth and fidelity are, in common experience, found to be a better and surer way of thriving, and more like to last and hold out, than fraud and falshood; and as honesty is a sure way of raising an estate, so it brings along with it greater security of the quiet enjoyment of it. There is never any real occasion, and seldom any colour and pretence of bringing such a man into trouble; for which reason Solomon says, *Better is the little which the righteous man hath, than great possessions without right:* because, tho' it be but little, yet it will wear like steel, and he is like to enjoy it quietly, and may increase it; whereas the unjust man is continually in danger of losing what he hath gotten.

And, if this be the case, it is very plain, that those vices, which pretend to bring the greatest advantage, are usually unprofitable; and to these kind of vices the text seems to point more particularly; *If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which is right, and it profited me not,* &c.

But, perhaps, though there be no profit in any sinful course, yet there may be some pleasure. That comes next to be examined; and I doubt not to make it evident, that there is no such pleasure in sin, as can make it a reasonable temptation to any man to venture upon it. The vices which pretend to bring the greatest pleasure, are lewdness, and intemperance, and revenge.

The two first of these are the highest pretenders to pleasure: but God knows, and the sinner himself knows, how thin and transitory this pleasure is, how much trouble attends it, and how many sighs and groans follow it; and whatever pleasure they may minister to the sense, they bring a great deal of anguish and perplexity to the mind; so that the trouble which they cause does more than countervail the pleasure which they bring; and they do not only disturb the mind, but they disease the body. How many are there, who, for the gratifying of an inordinate lust, and for the incomprehensible pleasure of a drunken fit, have endured the violent burnings of a

fever, or have conſumed the remainder of their day
languiſhing ſickneſs and pain?

And the reaſon of all this is plain, becauſe all the
ſures of ſin are violent, and forced, and unnatural,
therefore not like to continue; they are founded in
diſeaſe and diſtemper of our minds; and therefore al
end in pain and ſmart.

And, as for revenge, it is indeed a very eager and
patient deſire: but ſo far ſurely from being a pleal
that the very thoughts of it are extremely troubleſo
and raiſe as great ſtorms in the mind of a man, as
paſſion whatſoever; and I never heard of the pleaſur
being in a ſtorm; it is pleaſant, indeed, to be out o
when others are in it. And when revenge hath ſatis
itſelf, and laid its enemy bleeding at its foot, the
that executed it commonly repents himſelf the next
ment, and would give all the world to undo what
hath done; ſo that if there be any pleaſure in reven
it is ſo fitting, and of ſo ſhort a continuance, that
know not where to fix it: for there is nothing but
mult and rage before the execution of it, and after it
thing but remorſe and horror; ſo that if it be a pleaſu
it is but of one moment's continuance, and laſts no lo
er than the act is a-doing; and what man in his w
would purchaſe ſo ſhort a pleaſure at ſo dear a price? T
is moſt certainly true, and, if it were well conſidered,
ficient to convince any reaſonable man of the unreaſ
ableneſs of this paſſion.

Cain is a fearful inſtance of this kind, who, after
had drawn his brother into the field, and ſlain him the
how was he tormented with the guilt of what he h
done, and forced to cry out, *My puniſhment is great
than I can bear:* or, as ſome tranſlations render t
words, *mine iniquity is greater than that it can be forg
ven!* Gen. iv. 13. *From thy face,* ſays he to God, in t
anguiſh of his ſoul, *ſhall I be hid, and I ſhall be a fugiti
and a vagabond in the earth; and it ſhall come to pa
that every one that findeth me ſhall ſlay me,* ver. 14. *Ev
ry one that findeth me,* how fearful did his guilt mak
him! when probably there was then but one man in th
world beſides himſelf. And I may ſay of this ſort
men, as St. Jude does of thoſe in this time, Jude ver. 11

to unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain, they ge guilty of his crime, and his doom ſhall be theirs.

And here I cannot but take notice of a great evil that ows daily upon us; and therefore deſerves, with the eateſt ſeverity, to be diſcountenanced and puniſhed: mean that of duels, than which what can be more unriſtian? And what can be more unreaſonable, than for en, upon deliberation, and after the heat of paſſion is o-er, to reſolve to ſheath their ſwords in one another's owels, only for a haſty word? And, which is yet more nreaſonable, that becauſe two men are angry, and have uarrelled with one another, and will fight it out, that nerefore two more, who have no quarrel, no kind of iſpleaſure againſt one another, muſt fight too, and kill ne another if they can, for no reaſon, and upon no provocation. Theſe falſe rules of honour will not paſs in another world, in the higheſt and greateſt court of honour, rom whence there is no appeal.

I ſhall conclude this whole argument with that excelent ſaying of Cato, reported in A. Gellius, *cogitate cum animis veſtris,* &c. "Conſider, ſays he, with yourſelves, 'if ye be at any trouble and pain to do a good action, 'the trouble will be ſoon over; but the pleaſure and 'comfort of what ye have done well, abides with you 'all your days: but if, to gratify yourſelves, you do 'any thing that is wicked, the pleaſure will quickly 'vaniſh; but the guilt of it will ſtick by you for ever."

And is it not then much better to prevent all this trouble, by denying ourſelves theſe ſinful pleaſures, which will follow us with guilt whilſt we live, and fill us with horror and deſpair when we come to die?

I ſhall now make ſome reflections upon what has been delivered, and ſo conclude.

Firſt, What hath been ſaid upon this argument ought particularly to move thoſe who have ſo great a conſideration of this preſent life, and the temporal happineſs of it, that the practice of all virtues is a friend to their temporal, as well as eternal welfare, and all vice is an enemy to both.

Secondly, This likewiſe takes off all manner of excuſe from ſin and vice. It pretends not to ſerve the ſoul, and

to profit our future happineſs in another world; and i
be an enemy alſo to our preſent welfare in this w
what is there to be ſaid for it?

Thirdly, (which I deſire to inſiſt a little longer u
all the arguments which I have uſed, to convince me
the folly of a wicked courſe, are ſo many ſtrong and
anſwerable reaſons for repentance; for, when a m
convinced, that he hath done fooliſhly, and to his
prejudice, that *he hath ſinned, and that it profited him*
what can he do leſs, than to be heartily ſorry for it,
aſhamed of it, and reſolved to do better for the futu
Nothing ſurely is more reaſonable than repentance;
yet how hard is it to bring men to it: either men
miſtake the nature of it, and not do it effectually;
they will delay it, and not do it in time.

I. Men miſtake the nature of repentance; and th
are two great miſtakes about it.

1. Of thoſe who make the great force and virtue of
to conſiſt, not ſo much in the reſolution of the penite
as in the abſolution of the Prieſt. And this the chur
of Rome, in their doctrine concerning repentance, do
For their ſacrament of penance, as they call it, th
make to conſiſt of two parts; the matter of it, whi
conſiſts in theſe three acts of the penitent, confeſſio
contrition, and ſatisfaction; and the form of it, whi
is the abſolution of the Prieſt, in which they make t
main virtue and force of repentance to conſiſt; *in qu*
præcipuè ipſius vis ſita eſt, are the very words of th
council of Trent.

And here is a wide difference betwixt us; for thoug
the comfort of the penitent may in ſome caſe conſi
in the abſolution of the Prieſt, yet the virtue and effi
cacy of repentance does not at all conſiſt in it, bu
wholly in the contrition and ſincere reſolution of the pe
nitent, as the ſcripture every where declares: and, t
think otherwiſe, is of dangerous conſequence; becauſe
it encourageth men to hope for the benefit of repen-
tance, that is, the pardon and forgiveneſs of their ſins,
without having truly repented. And indeed the coun-
cil of Trent have ſo framed their doctrines in this point,
that any one may ſee, that they did not matter how
much they abated on the part of the penitent, provided

the

e power of the Priest be but advanced, and kept up in
i full height.

2. The other mistake is of those who make repen-
tance to consist in the bare resolution of amendment,
though it never has its effect; that is, though the sinner
ther do not what he resolved, or do it only for a fit,
d during his present trouble and conviction.

There is one case indeed, and but one, wherein a re-
lution not brought to effect is available, and that is,
hen nothing hinders the performance and execution of
, but only want of time and opportunity for it, when
e repentance is sincere, and the resolution real, but the
an is cut off between the actual reformation which he
tended, and which God, who sees things certainly in
eir causes, knows would have followed, if the man
ad lived to give demonstration of it. But this is no-
ing to those who have the opportunity to make good
eir resolution, and do not: For, because the resolu-
on which would have been performed, had there been
ime and opportunity, is reckoned for a true repentance,
nd accepted of God, as if it had been done; therefore
he resolution which was not brought to effect, when
here was time and opportunity for it, hath not the na-
ure of true repentance, nor will it be accepted of God.

I will but add one thing more upon this head, because I
oubt it is not always sufficiently considered; and that is
his, that a sincere resolution of a better course does imply
a resolution of the means, as well as of the end: he that is
truly resolved against any sin, is likewise resolved against
the occasions and temptations that would lead and draw
him to it; otherwise he hath taken up a rash and foolish
resolution, which he is not like to keep, because he did
not resolve upon that which was necessary to the keep-
ing of it. So he that resolves upon any part of his
duty, must likewise resolve upon the means which are
necessary to the discharge and performance of it; he that
is resolved to be just in his dealing, and to pay his debts,
must be diligent in his calling, and mind his business,
because, without this, he cannot do the other; for no-
thing can be more vain and fond, than for a man to
pretend that he is resolved upon doing his duty, when
he neglects any thing that is necessary to put him into

a capacity, and to further him in the diſcharge o
This is as if a man ſhould reſolve to be well, and yet n
take phyſic, or be careleſs in obſerving the rules w
are preſcribed, in order to his health. So, for a ma
reſolve againſt drunkenneſs, and yet to run himſelf u
the temptations which naturally lead to it, by
quenting the company of lewd and intemperate perſo
this is, as if a man ſhould reſolve againſt the plague,
run into the peſt-houſe. Whatever can reaſonably m
a man to be reſolved upon any end, will, if this reſo
tion be wiſe and honeſt, determine him as ſtrongly to
the means which are proper and neceſſary to that e

Theſe are the common miſtakes about this matt
which men are the more willing to run into, beca
they are loth to be brought to a true repentance; t
nature whereof is not difficult to be underſtood, for n
thing in the world is plainer; only men are always ſlo
to underſtand what they have no mind to put in pr
ctice. But,

II. Beſides the miſtakes about repentance, there
another great miſcarriage in this matter, and that is t
delay of repentance; men are loth to ſet about it; a
therefore they put it upon their laſt hazard, and reſol
then to huddle it up as well as they can: But this ce
tainly is great folly, to be ſtill making more work f
repentance, becauſe it is to create ſo much needleſs trou
ble and vexation to ourſelves; it is to go on ſtill in play
ing a fooliſh part, in hopes to retrieve all by an after
game; this is extremely dangerous, becauſe we ma
certainly ſin, but it is not certain we ſhall repent; ou
repentance may be prevented, and we may be cut off i
our ſins; but if we ſhould have ſpace for it, repentanc
may, in proceſs of time, grow an hundred times mor
difficult than it is at preſent.

But if it were much more certain, and more eaſy thar
it is, if it were nothing but a hearty ſorrow and ſhame
for our ſins, and an asking God forgiveneſs for them,
without being put to the trouble of reforming our wicked
lives, yet this were great folly, to do thoſe things which
will certainly grieve us after we have done them, and
put us to ſhame, and to ask forgiveneſs for them. It was

well

ell said of old Cato, *Ne tu ſtultus es homuncio, qui ma- veniam precari, quàm non peccare;* "Thou art a fool- iſh man indeed, who chooſeſt rather to ask forgiveneſs, than not to offend."

At the beſt, repentance implies a fault; it is an after- iſdom, which ſuppoſeth a man at firſt to have played e fool; it is but the beſt end of a bad buſineſs; a hard ift, and a deſperate hazard, which a man that had acted udently would never have been put to; it is a plaiſter ter we have dangerouſly wounded ourſelves: But cer- inly it had been much wiſer, to have prevented the nger of the wound, and the pain of curing it. A wiſe an would not make himſelf ſick if he could; or if he ere already ſo would not make himſelf ſicker, though e had the moſt effectual and infallible remedy in the orld in his power: But this is not the caſe of a ſinner; r repentance, as well as faith, is the gift of God.

Above all, let me caution you not to put off this great nd neceſſary work, to the moſt unſeaſonable time of ll other, the time of ſickneſs and death, upon a fond reſumption, that you can be reconciled to God when ou pleaſe, and exerciſe ſuch a repentance as will make our peace with him at any time.

I am heartily afraid, that a very great part of man- ind do miſcarry upon this confidence, and are ſwallow- d up in the gulph of eternal perdition with this plank in heir arms. The common cuſtom is, and I fear it is too ommon, when the phyſician has given over his patient, hen and not till then, to ſend for the miniſter; not ſo much to enquire into the man's condition, and to give im ſuitable advice, as to miniſter comfort, and to ſpeak peace to him at a venture.

But, let me tell you, that herein you put an extreme dif- ficult taſk upon us, in expecting that we ſhould pour wine and oil into the wound before it be ſearched, and ſpeak ſmooth and comfortable things to a man that is but juſt brought to a ſenſe of the long courſe of a lewd and wicked life impenitently continued in. Alas! what comfort can we give to men in ſuch a caſe? We are loth to drive them to deſpair; and yet we muſt not deſtroy them by preſumption; pity and good-nature do ſtrongly tempt us to make the beſt of their caſe, and to give them all

the

the little hopes, which with any kind of reaſon we
and God knows it is but very little that we can give
ſuch perſons upon good ground; for it all depends u
the degree and ſincerity of their repentance, which
only knows, and we can but gueſs at. We can ea
tell them what they ought to have done, and what t
ſhould do if they were to live longer, and what is
beſt that they can do in thoſe ſtraights into which t
have brought themſelves, *viz.* to exerciſe as deep a
row and repentance for their ſins as is poſſible, anc
cry mightily to God for mercy, in and through the
rit of our bleſſed Saviour. But how far this will be
vailable in theſe circumſtances, we cannot tell; beca
we do not know, whether if the man had lived long
this repentance, and theſe reſolutions which he now
clares of a better courſe, would have been good.

And, after all is done that can be done in ſo ſhort
time, and in ſuch circumſtances of confuſion and diſ
der, as commonly attend dying perſons, I doubt the
ſult of all will be this, that there is much more grou
of fear than hope concerning them; nay perhaps, wh
we are preſſing the dying ſinner to repentance, and
is bungling about it, he expires in great doubt and pe
plexity of mind, what will become of him; or, if
eyes be cloſed with more comfortable hopes of his conc
tion, the next time he opens them again, he may fi
his fearful miſtake, like the rich man in the parable, wh
when he was in hell, lift up his eyes, being in tormen

This is a very diſmal and melancholy conſideratio
and commands all men preſently to repent, and not
put off the main work of their lives to the end of then
and the time of ſickneſs and old age. Let us not offe
up a carcaſe to God inſtead of a living and acceptabl
ſacrifice: But let us turn to God, in the days of ou
health and ſtrength, *before the evil days come, and th
years draw nigh, of which we ſhall ſay we have no plea
ſure in them; before the ſun, and the moon, and the ſtar
be darkened,* as Solomon elegantly expreſſeth it, Eccle
xii. 1, 2. before all the comforts of life be gone, befor
our faculties be all ceaſed and ſpent, before our under
ſtandings be too weak, and our wills too ſtrong; our un
derſtand

rſtandings be too weak for conſideration, and the deli-rate exerciſe of repentance, and our wills too ſtrong d ſtiff to be bent and bowed to it.

Let us not deceive ourſelves, heaven is not an hoſpital ade to receive all ſick and aged perſons that can but t up a faint requeſt to be admitted there; no, no, they e never like to ſee the kingdom of God, who, inſtead ſeeking it in the firſt place, make it their laſt refuge and treat: and when they find the ſentence of death upon em, only to avoid preſent execution, do bethink them-lves of getting to heaven, and ſince there is no other medy, are contented to petition the great King and dge of the world, that they may be tranſported thi-ner.

Upon all theſe conſiderations, let us uſe no delay in matter of ſuch mighty conſequence to our eternal hap-neſs, but let the counſel which was given to Nebu-hadnezzar be acceptable to us; let us *break off our ſins righteouſneſs, and our iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the oor; if ſo be it may be a lengthening of our tranquility.* Re-entance and alms do well together; let us *break off our ins by righteouſneſs, and our iniquities by ſhewing mercy o the poor;* eſpecially upon this great occaſion, which is Majeſty's great goodneſs to thoſe diſtreſſed ſtrangers, hat have taken ſanctuary among us, hath lately preſent-d us withal, remembring that we alſo are in the body, nd liable to the like ſufferings; and conſidering on the ne hand, that gracious promiſe of our Lord, *Bleſſed are he merciful, for they ſhall receive mercy;* and on the other and, that terrible threatning in St. James, *He ſhall have udgment without mercy, that hath ſhewed no mercy.*

To conclude from all that hath been ſaid, let us take p a preſent reſolution of a better courſe, and enter im-mediately upon it *to-day, whilſt it is called to-day, leſt a-y of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin. O that men were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end! And grant, we beſeech thee, almighty God, that we may all know and do, in this our day, the things which belong to our peace, for thy mercy's ſake in Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory now and for ever.* Amen.

SER-

SERMON CLXIII.

The ſhamefulneſs of ſin, an argument for repentance.

Preached in Lent.

ROM. vi. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in theſe things, whereof ye now aſhamed? for the end of thoſe things is death. But now being made free from ſin, and become ſervants to God, ye have your fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

THERE are two paſſions which do always in ſome degree or other accompany a true repentance, *viz.* ſorrow and ſhame for our ſins: becauſe theſe are neceſſary to engage men to a reſolution of making that change wherein repentance does conſiſt: for, till we are heartily ſorry for what we have done, and aſhamed of the evil of it, it is not likely that we ſhould ever come to a firm and ſteady purpoſe of forſaking our evil ways and betaking ourſelves to a better courſe.

And theſe two paſſions of ſorrow, and ſhame for our ſins, were wont anciently to be ſignified by thoſe outward expreſſions of humiliation and repentance, which we find ſo frequently mentioned in ſcripture, of *being clothed in ſackcloth*, as a teſtimony of our ſorrow and mourning for our ſins, and of *being ſprinkled upon the head, and covered over with filth and dirt, with duſt and aſhes*, in token of our ſhame and confuſion of face for all our iniquities and tranſgreſſions. Hence are thoſe expreſſions in ſcripture, of *repenting in ſackcloth and aſhes*, of *lying down in our ſhame, and being covered with confuſion*, in token of their great ſorrow and ſhame for their manifold

manifold and heinous sins which they had been guilty of.

Of the former of these, *viz.* trouble and sorrow for our sins, I have very lately * treated; and, of the latter, I intend now, by God's assistance, to speak, *viz.* Shame for our sins, and that from these words which I have recited to you; *What fruit had ye then in those things?* &c. In which words the Apostle makes a comparison between an holy and virtuous, and a sinful and vitious course of life, and sets before us a perfect enumeration of the manifest inconveniencies of the one, and the manifold advantages of the other.

First, The manifest inconveniencies of a vitious and sinful course; and the Apostle mentions these three.

I. It is unprofitable, it brings no manner of present benefit and advantage to us, if all things be rightly calculated and considered. *What fruit had ye then in those things? Then, i. e.* at the time when you committed those sins, had you any present advantage by them? No, certainly; but quite contrary.

II. The reflection upon our sins afterwards is cause of shame and confusion to us; *What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?*

III. The final issue and consequence of these things is very dismal and miserable; *The end of those things is death.* Let us put these things together, and see what they amount to: no fruit then when ye did these things, and shame now when ye come afterwards to reflect upon them, and death and misery at the last.

Secondly, Here is likeways, on the other hand, represented to us the manifold benefits of an holy and virtuous life. And that upon these two accounts:

I. Of the present benefit of it, which the Apostle calls here, *fruit; Ye have your fruit unto holiness.*

II. In respect of the future reward of it; *And the end everlasting life.* Here is a considerable earnest in hand, and mighty recompence afterwards, infinitely beyond the proportion of our best actions and services, both in respect of the greatness and the duration of it, *everlasting life*; for a few transient and very imperfect actions of obe-

* Sermon 161.

obedience, a perfect, and immutable, and endless stat
happiness. I shall begin with the

First of the two general heads, the manifest inco
niencies of a sinful and vitious course; and the Apostl
told you, in the text, takes notice of three.

I. It is unprofitable, and if all things be rightly
culated and considered, it brings no manner of pre
advantage and benefit to us. *What fruit had ye the
those things? Then, i. e.* when ye committed those
had you any present advantage by them? No certai
quite contrary; as if the Apostle had said, if you
ously reflect upon your former course of impiety and
wherein you have continued so long, you cannot but
knowledge that it brought no manner of advantage
you; and, when all accounts are truly cast up, you m
if you will confess the truth, own that you were in
sort gainers by it; for the words are a μείωσις, and the
postle plainly intends more than he expresseth, *What fr
had ye then in those things? i. e.* The wicked co
which ye formerly lived in was so far from being any w
beneficial to you, that it was, on the contrary, upon
accounts, extremely to your prejudice and disadvanta

And this is not only true in respect of the final i
and consequence of a sinful and vitious course of life, t
no man is a gainer by it at the long-run; and, if we t
into our consideration another world, and the dread
and endless misery which a wicked and impenitent
will then plunge men into, which, in the farther handli
of this text, will at large be spoken to, being the last
the three particulars under this first general head: but
is true likewise, even in respect of this world, and with
gard only to this present and temporal life, without loo
ing so far as the future recompence and punishment of
in another world.

And this would plainly appear by an induction of th
three particulars.

1. It is evident that some sins are plainly mischievo
to the temporal interest of men, as tending either to t
disturbance of their minds, or the endangering of the
health and lives, or to the prejudice of their estate

or the blasting of them in their reputation and good name.

2. That there are other sins, which, though they are not so visibly burdened and attended with mischievous consequences, yet they are plainly unprofitable, and bring no manner of real advantage to men, either in respect of gain or pleasure; such are the sins of profaneness, and customary swearing in common conversation.

3. That even those sins and vices which make the fairest pretence to be of advantage to us, when all accounts are cast up, and all circumstances duly weighed and considered, will be found to be but pretenders, and in no degree able to perform and make good what they so largely promise before-hand, when they tempt us to the commission of them. There are some vices which pretend to bring in great profit, and tempt worldly minded men, whose minds are disposed to catch at that bait; such are the sins of covetousness and oppression, of fraud and falshood, and perfidiousness. And there are others which pretend to bring pleasure along with them, which is almost an irresistible temptation to voluptuous and sensual men; such are the sins of revenge, and intemperance, and lust. But, upon a particular examination of each of these, it will evidently appear, that there is no such profit or pleasure in any of these vices, as can be a reasonable temptation to any man to fall in love with them, and to engage in the commission and practice of them. But I shall not now enlarge upon any of these, having lately discoursed upon them from another text. I shall therefore proceed to the

II. Inconvenience which I mentioned of a sinful and vitious course, *viz.* that the reflection upon our sins afterwards is cause of great shame and confusion to us. *What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?* And this is a very proper argument for this season; because the passion of shame, as it is a natural and usual consequent of sin, so it is a disposition necessarily required to a true repentance.

Most men, when they commit a known fault, are apt to be ashamed, and ready to blush whenever they are put in mind of it, and charged with it. Some persons,

indeed, have gone ſo far in ſin, and have waded ſo c in a vitious courſe, as to be confirmed and hardene their wickedneſs to that degree, as to be paſt all ſha and almoſt all ſenſe of their faults; eſpecially in reg of the more common and ordinary vices, which are vogue and faſhion, and in the commiſſion whereof t are countenanced and encouraged by company and ample. Such were thoſe of whom the Prophet ſpea Jer. vi. 15. *Were they aſhamed when they had commi abomination? nay, they were not aſhamed, neither co they bluſh.*

But yet even theſe perſons, when they come to ſenſible of their guilt, ſo as to be brought to repentan they cannot then but be aſhamed of what they h done. For what face ſoever men may ſet upon th vices, ſin is ſhameful in itſelf, and ſo apt to fill n with confuſion of face, when they ſeriouſly reflect up it, that they cannot harden their fore-heads agai all ſenſe of ſhame. And whatever men may declare the contrary, this is tacitly acknowledged by the ge rality of men, in that they are ſo ſolicitous and care to conceal their faults from the eyes of others, and keep them as ſecret as they can; and whenever th are diſcovered, and laid open, it is matter of great trou and confuſion to them; and if any one happen to u braid and twit them with their miſcarriages of any kin they cannot bear with patience to hear of them.

There are, indeed, ſome few ſuch prodigies and mo ſters of men, as are able, after great ſtrugglings with th conſciences, to force themſelves to boaſt impudently their wickedneſs, and *to glory in their ſhame;* not b cauſe they do really and inwardly believe their vices be an honour and glory to them, but becauſe, conſcio to themſelves that they have done ſhameful things, a believing that others know it, they put on a whor fore head, and think to prevent the upbraiding of othe by owning what they have done, and ſeeming to glory it: but yet, for all that, theſe perſons, if they would co feſs the truth, do feel ſome confuſion in themſelves, a they are inwardly ſenſible of the infamy and reproach ſuch actions, for all they would ſeem to the world to be it out ſo well; for, when all is done, there is a wide diff

ren

rence between the impudence of a criminal, and the confidence and assurance of a clear conscience, that is fully satisfied of its own innocence and integrity. The conscientious man is not ashamed of any thing that he hath done: but the impudent sinner only seems not to be so, but all the while feels a great deal of confusion in his own mind. The one is sensible and satisfied that there is no cause for shame; the other is conscious to himself that there is cause, but he offers violence to himself, and suppresses all he can the sense and shew of it, and will needs face down the world, that he hath no guilt and regret in his own mind for any thing that he hath done.

Now, that sin is truly matter of shame, will be very evident, if we consider these two things.

1. If we consider the nature of this passion of shame.
2. If we consider what there is in sin which gives real ground and occasion for it.

First, For the nature of this passion. Shame is the trouble or confusion of mind, occasioned by something that tends to our disgrace and dishonour, to our infamy and reproach. Now, there is nothing truly and really matter of shame and reproach to us, but what we ourselves have done, or have been some way or other accessary to the doing of, by our own fault or neglect, and by consequence what it was in our power and choice not to have done: for no man is ashamed of what he is sure he could not help. Necessity, unless it be wilful and contracted, and happens through some precedent occasion and fault of our own, does take away all just cause of shame.

And nothing likewise is matter of shame, but something which we ought not to do, which misbecomes us, and is below the dignity and perfection of our nature, and is against some duty and obligation that is upon us to the contrary; and consequently is a reproach to our reason and understanding, a reflection upon our prudence and discretion, and, at first sight, hath an appearance of ruggedness and deformity.

And all actions of this nature do receive several aggravations, with respect to the persons against whom, and in whose presence, and under whose eye and know-

ledge these shameful things are done. Now, I shall shew in the

Second place, That sin contains in it whatsoever is justly accounted infamous, together with all the aggravations of shame and reproach that can be imagined. And this will appear by considering sin and vice in these two respects:

1. In relation to ourselves.

2. In respect to God, against whom, and in whose sight it is committed.

I. In relation to ourselves, there are these four things which make sin and vice to be very shameful.

1. The natural ruggedness and deformity of it.

2. That it is so great a dishonour to our nature, and to the dignity and excellency of our being.

3. That it is so great a reproach to our reason and understanding, and so foul a reflection upon our prudence and discretion.

4. That it is our own voluntary act and choice.

Every one of these considerations render it very shameful, and all of them together ought to fill the sinner with *confusion of face.* I shall speak to them severally.

1st, The natural ruggedness and deformity of sin and vice render it very shameful. Men are apt to be ashamed of any thing in them, or belonging to them, that looks ugly and monstrous, and therefore they endeavour with great care and art to conceal and dissemble their deformity in any kind. How strangely do we see men concerned, with all their diligence and skill, to cover and palliate any defect or deformity in their bodies; an ill face, if they could; however, a foul and bad complexion, or blind or squinting eye, a crooked body or limb, or whatever is ill-favoured or monstrous? Now, in regard of our souls and better part, sin hath all the monstrousness and deformity in it which we can imagine in the body, and much more: and it is as hard to be covered from the eye of discerning men, as the deformity of the body is; but impossible to be concealed from the eye of God, to whom darkness and light, secret and open, are all one. But then the moral defects and deformities of the mind have this advantage above the natural defects and deformities of the body, that the former are possible

to

o be cured by the grace of God, in conjunction with ur own care and endeavour: whereas no diligence or kill can ever help or remove many of the natural defects nd deformities of the body.

Sin is the blindneſs of our minds, the perverſeneſs and rookedneſs of our wills, and the monſtrous irregularity nd diſorder of our affections and appetites; it is the iſplacing of our powers and faculties, the ſetting of our vills and paſſions above our reaſon; all which is ugly nd unnatural, and if we were truly ſenſible of it, matter of great ſhame and reproach to us.

There is hardly any vice but, at firſt ſight, hath an odious and ugly appearance to a well-diſciplined and innocent mind, that hath never had any acquaintance with it. And however familiarity and cuſtom may abate the ſenſe of its deformity, yet it is as it was before, and the change that is made in us does not alter the nature of the thing. Drunkenneſs and furious paſſion, pride and falſhood, covetouſneſs and cruelty, are odious, and matter of ſhame, in the ſincere and uncorrupted opinion of all mankind. And though a man, by the frequent practice of any of theſe vices, and a long familiarity with them, may not be ſo ſenſible of the deformity of them in himſelf, yet he quickly diſcerns the uglineſs of them in others, whenever they come in his way, and could with ſalt and ſharpneſs enough upbraid thoſe whom he ſees guilty of them, but that he is inwardly conſcious, that the reproach may be ſo eaſily returned and thrown back upon himſelf. However, this is a natural acknowledgment of the deformity and ſhamefulneſs of ſin and vice.

2*dly*, They are likewiſe ſhameful, becauſe they are ſo great a diſhonour to our nature, and to the dignity and excellency of our being. We go below ourſelves, and act beneath the dignity of our nature, when we do any thing contrary to the rules and laws of it, or to the revealed will of God; becauſe theſe are the bounds and limits which God and nature hath ſet to human actions, and are the meaſures of our duty, *i. e.* what is fit and becoming for us to do, and what not. So that all ſin and vice is baſe and unworthy, and beneath the dignity of our nature; it argues a corrupt and diſeaſed conſtitu-

tion and habit of mind, a crooked and perverse disposi
on of will, and a sordid and mean temper of spirit.

And therefore the scripture doth frequently repres
a state of sin and wickedness, by that which is accoun
ed the basest and meanest condition among men, by
state of servitude and slavery, especially if it had be
our choice, or the evident and necessary consequence
our wilful fault: for we do as bad as chuse it, when
wilfully bring it upon ourselves. So that to be a sinn
is to be a slave to some vile lust, appetite, or passio
to some unnatural or irregular desire; it is to sell ou
selves into bondage, and to part with one of the mo
valuable things in the world, our liberty, upon low a
unworthy terms. Such a state and condition does un
voidably debase and debauch our minds, and break th
force and firmness of our spirits, and rob us, as Dalil
did Sampson, of our strength and courage, of our res
lution and constancy; so that men have not the hea
left to design and endeavour in good earnest their ow
rescue out of this mean and miserable estate, into whic
by their own folly and fault, they have brought them
selves.

When men are engaged into a custom of sinning, an
have habituated themselves to any vitious course, ho
do they betray their weakness, and want of resolution
by being at the beck of every fooliſh lust, and by suffe
ring themselves to be commanded and hurried away b
every unruly appetite and passion, to do things whic
they know to be greatly to their harm and prejudice
and which they are convinced are mean and sordid thing
and such as they are ashamed that any wise man shoul
see them doing! And there is no greater argument of
pitiful and degenerate spirit, than to commit such thing
as a man would blush to be surprised in, and would b
mightily troubled to hear of afterwards, and, which i
more, after he hath been convinced by manifold expe
rience, that they are a shame and disgrace to him, an
make him to hang down his head, and let fall his coun
tenance, whenever he is in better company than himself
yet, after this, to go and do the same things again
which he is sensible are so shameful, and to be so impo
tent, and to have so little command of himself, as not
to

o be able to free himſelf from this bondage, nor the eart to pray to God that by his grace he would enable im thereto.

And that ſin is of this ſhameful nature, is evident, in hat the greateſt part of ſinners take ſo much care and ains to hide their vices from the ſight and notice of nen, and to this purpoſe chuſe darkneſs and ſecret pla- es of retirement to commit their ſins in. The Apoſtle akes notice, that thus much modeſty was left even in a very wicked and degenerate age, 1 Theſſ. v. 7. *They hat be drunk*, ſays he, *are drunk in the night*. Now, all this is a plain acknowledgment, that ſin is a ſpurious and degenerate thing, that it miſbecomes human nature, and is below the dignity of a reaſonable creature: other- wiſe why ſhould men be ſo ſolicitous and concerned to cover their faults from the ſight of others? If they are not aſhamed of them, why do they not bring them into the broad light, and ſhew them openly, if they think they will endure it?

So true is that obſervation which Plato makes, that though a man were ſure that God would forgive his ſins, and that men ſhould never know them, yet there is that baſeneſs in ſin, that a wiſe man, that conſiders what it is, would bluſh to himſelf alone to be guilty of it; and though he were not afraid of the puniſhment, would be aſhamed of the turpitude and deformity of it.

Did but a man conſider ſeriouſly with himſelf, how mean and unmanly it is for a man to be drunk; and what an apiſh and ridiculous thing he renders himſelf to all ſober men that behold him, and with what contempt and ſcorn they entertain ſuch a ſight; and how brutiſh it is to wallow in any unlawful luſt, and how much a man deſcends and ſtoops beneath himſelf; what ſhame- ful fear and cowardice he betrays when he is frighted to tell a lie out of fear, or tempted thereto for ſome little advantage; and yet is ſo inconſiſtent with himſelf, as to have, or to pretend to have the courage to fight any man that ſhall tell him ſo ſaucy a truth, as that he told a lie.

Would but a man think before-hand, how unworthy, and how unequal a thing it is to defraud or cheat his brother,

brother, or to do any thing to another man which
would be loth in the like caſe that he ſhould do to hi
how baſe a thing it is for a man to be perfidious a
falſe to his promiſe or truſt; how monſtrous to be u
thankful to one that hath highly obliged him, and eve
way and upon all occaſions deſerved well at his hand
and ſo I might inſtance in all other ſorts of ſins; I ſa
he that conſiders this well and wiſely, though there we
no law againſt ſin, and, if it were a poſſible caſe, a
fit to be ſuppoſed, though there were no ſuch being
God in the world, to call him to account and puni
him for it, yet out of mere generoſity and greatneſs
mind, out of pure reſpect to himſelf, and the digni
and rank of his being, and of his order in the worl
out of very reverence to human nature, and the inwa
perſuaſion of his own mind, however he came by tha
perſuaſion, concerning the indecency, and deformity
and ſhamefulneſs of the thing, I ſay, for theſe reaſons,
there were no other, a man would ſtrive with himſel
with all his might, to refrain from ſin and vice, and no
only bluſh, but abhor to think of doing a wicked action

3*dly*, Sin will yet farther appear ſhameful, in that it i
ſo great a reproach to our underſtandings and reaſons
and ſo foul a blot upon our prudence and diſcretion
Omnis peccans aut ignorans eſt, aut incogitans, is a ſaying
I think of one of the ſchool-men, as one would gueſ
by the Latin of it; "Every ſinner is either an ignorant
"or an inconſiderate perſon." Either men do no not un-
derſtand what they do, when they commit ſin; or, if
they do know, they do not actually attend to and con-
ſider what they know. Either they are habitually or
actually ignorant of what they do; for ſin and conſide-
ration cannot dwell together; it is ſo very unreaſonable
and abſurd a thing, that it requires either groſs ignorance,
or ſtupid inadvertency, to make a man capable of com-
mitting it. Whenever a man ſins, he muſt either be
deſtitute of reaſon, or muſt lay it aſide or aſleep for the
time, and ſo ſuffer himſelf to be hurried away, and to
act brutiſhly, as if he had no underſtanding.

Did but men attentively conſider what it is to offend
God, and to break the laws of that great law-giver, who

is

able to save or to destroy, they would discern so many invincible objections against the thing, and would be filled with such strong fears and jealousies of the fatal issue and event of it, that they would not dare to venture upon it. And therefore we find the scripture so frequently resolving the wickedness of men into their ignorance and inconsiderateness, Psal. xiv. 4. *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* intimating that by their actions one would judge so. And the same account God himself also gives elsewhere of the frequent disobedience and rebellion of the people of Israel, Deut. xxxii. 28, 29. *They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. Oh! that they were wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end!* Knowledge and consideration would cure a great part of the wickedness that is in the world; men would not commit sin with so much greediness, would they but take time to consider and bethink themselves what they do.

Have we not reason then to be ashamed of sin, which casts such a reproach of ignorance and rashness upon us? and of imprudence likewise and indiscretion? since nothing can be more directly and plainly against our greatest and best interest both of body and soul, both here and hereafter, both now and to all eternity. And there is nothing that men are more ashamed of than to be guilty of so great an imprudence, as to act clearly against their own interest, to which sin is the most plainly cross and contrary that it is possible for any thing to be. No man can engage and continue in a sinful course, without being so far abused and infatuated, as to be contented to part with everlasting happiness, and to be undone and miserable for ever; none but he that can persuade himself against all the reason and sense of mankind, that there is pleasure enough in the transient acts of sin to make amends for eternal sorrow, and shame, and suffering. And can such a thought as this enter into the heart of a considerate man? Epicurus was so wise, as to conclude against all pleasures that would give a man more trouble and disturbance afterwards; against all pleasures that had pain and grief consequent upon them; and he forbids his wise man to taste of them or

to

to meddle with them; and had he believed any thing a future ſtate, he muſt, according to his principle, ha pronounced it the greateſt folly that could be, for a man to purchaſe the pleaſures and happineſs of a fe years, at the dear rate of eternal miſery and torme So that if it be a diſgrace to a man to act imprudentl and to do things plainly againſt his intereſt, then vice the greateſt reproach that is poſſible.

The *4th* and laſt conſideration, which render ſin ſhameful to us, is, that it is our own voluntary act a choice. We chuſe this diſgrace, and willingly bri this reproach upon ourſelves. We pity an idiot, a one that is naturally deſtitute of underſtanding, or o that loſeth the uſe of his reaſon by a diſeaſe or other i evitable accident: but every one deſpiſeth him who b ſots himſelf, and plays the fool out of careleſſneſs and groſs neglect of himſelf. And this is the caſe of the ſi ner; there is no man that ſinneth, but becauſe he wanting to himſelf; he might be wiſer and do bette and will not; but he chuſes his own devices, and volu tarily runs himſelf upon thoſe inconveniencies, which was in his power to have avoided.

Not but that I do heartily own and lament the grea corruption and degeneracy of our nature; and the ſtron propenſions which appear ſo early in us to that which i evil: but God hath provided a remedy and cure for al this: for, ſince *the grace of God, which brings ſalvatio unto all men, hath appeared*, under the influence, an through the aſſiſtance of that grace which is offered t them by the goſpel, men may *deny ungodlineſs an worldly luſts, and live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in thi preſent world.* For I make no doubt, but ſince God ha entered into a new covenant of grace with mankind and offered new terms of life and ſalvation to us; I ſay, I doubt not, but his grace is ready at hand, to enable us to perform all thoſe conditions which he requires o us, if we be not wanting to ourſelves.

There was a way of ſalvation eſtabliſhed before the goſpel was clearly revealed to the world; and they who under that diſpenſation, whether Jews or Gentiles, ſincerely endeavoured to do the will of God, ſo far as they knew it, were not utterly deſtitute of divine grace and

aſſiſt

ſiſtance: but now there is a more plentiful effuſion of God's grace and holy Spirit: ſo that whoever, under the goſpel, ſins deliberately, ſins wilfully, and is wicked, not for want of power, but of will to do otherways; and this is that which makes ſin ſo ſhameful a thing, and ſo very reproachful to us, that we deſtroy ourſelves by our own folly and neglect of ourſelves, and become miſerable by our own choice, and when the grace of God hath put it into our power to be wiſe and to be happy.

I ſhould now have proceeded to the ſecond thing I propoſed, which was to conſider ſin in relation to God, and to ſhew that it is no leſs ſhameful in that reſpect, than I have ſhewn it to be with regard to ourſelves: but this I ſhall refer to another opportunity.

SERMON CLXIV.

The ſhamefulneſs of ſin, an argument for repentance.

ROM. vi. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in theſe things, whereof ye are now aſhamed? for the end of thoſe things is death. But now being made free from ſin, and become ſervants to God, ye have your fruit unto holineſs, and the end everlaſting life.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

IN theſe words the Apoſtle makes a compariſon between an holy and virtuous, and a ſinful and vitious courſe of life, and ſets before us a perfect enumeration of the manifold inconveniencies of the one, and the manifold advantages of the other.

I began with the firſt of theſe, *viz.* to ſhew the manifeſt inconveniencies of a ſinful and vitious courſe. I am upon the ſecond inconvenience of a ſinful courſe, *viz.* that the reflection upon it afterwards is cauſe of great ſhame and confuſion of face to us; and that,

Firſt,

First, In relation to ourselves. Which I have dispa
ed, and proceed now, in the

Second place, To consider sin in respect of God, aga
whom, and in whose sight and presence it is committ
and, upon examination, it will appear to be no
shameful in this respect than the other.

There are some persons before whom we are more
to be ashamed and blush than before others; as th
whom we reverence, those to whom we are greatly o
ged, and those who are clear of those faults which we
guilty of; and those who hate or greatly dislike what
do: especially if they be present with us, and in our co
pany; if they stand by us, and observe, and take not
of what we do, and are likely to publish our folly, a
make it known, and have authority and power to pun
us for our faults; we are ashamed to have done a
thing that is vile and unworthy before such persons. No
to render sin the more shameful, God may be consider
by us under all these notions, and in all these respects.

1. Whenever we commit any sin, we do it befo
him, in his presence, and under his eye and knowledg
to whom of all persons in the world we ought to pa
the most profound reverence. I remember Seneca some
where says; that "There are some persons, *quorum in*
"*terventu perditi quoque homines vitia supprimerent,* tha
"are so awful and so generally reverenced for the emi
"nency of their virtues, that even the most profligat
"and impudent sinners will endeavour to suppress thei
"vices, and refrain from any thing that is notoriously
"bad, and uncomely, whilst such persons stand by
"them, and are in presence." Such an one was Cato
among the Romans. The people of Rome had such a
regard and reverence for him, that if he appeared, they
would not begin or continue their usual sports, 'till he
was withdrawn from the theatre, thinking them too
light to be acted before a person of his gravity and vir-
tue: and if they were so much awed by the presence of
a wise and virtuous man, that they were ashamed to
do any thing that was unseemly before him; how much
more should the presence of the holy God, who is of
purer eyes than to behold iniquity, make us blush to

do

o any thing that is lewd and vile in his ſight, and fill us ith ſhame and confuſion of face at the thoughts of it? low, whenever we commit any ſin, God looks upon us; nd he alone is an ample theatre indeed. That he ob erves what we do, ought to be more to us, than if the yes of all the world beſides were gazing upon us.

2. He likewiſe is incomparably our greateſt benefactor, nd there is no perſon in the world to whom in any legree we ſtand ſo much obliged as to him; and from whom we can expect and hope for ſo much good as from im; the conſideration whereof muſt make us aſhamed, o often as we conſider, and are conſcious to ourſelves, hat we have done any thing that is grievous and diſpleaſing to him.

We are wont to have a peculiar reverence for thoſe to whom we are exceedingly beholden, and to be much aſhamed to do any thing before them, which may ſignify diſreſpect, and much more enmity againſt them; becauſe this would be horrible ingratitude, one of the moſt odious and ſhameful of all vices. And is there any one to whom we can ſtand more obliged, than to him that made us, than to the author and founder of our beings, and the great patron and preſerver of our lives? And can there then be any, before whom, and againſt whom we ſhould be more aſhamed to offend? When the prodigal in the parable would ſet forth the ſhamefulneſs of his miſcarriage, he aggravates it from hence, that he had offended againſt and before one to whom he had been ſo infinitely obliged: *Father* (ſays he) *I have ſinned againſt heaven, and in thy ſight.*

3. We are aſhamed likewiſe to be guilty of any fault or crime before thoſe perſons who are clear of it, or of any thing of the like nature themſelves. Men are not apt to be aſhamed before thoſe who are their fellow-criminals, and involved with them in the ſame guilt, becauſe they do not ſtand in awe of them, nor can have any reverence for them. Thoſe who are equally guilty, muſt bear with one another. We are not apt to fear the cenſures and reproofs of thoſe who are as bad as ourſelves; but we are aſhamed to do a foul and unworthy action before thoſe who are innocent and free

from the ſame, or the like; ſins and vices which we a guilty of.

Now, whenever we commit any ſin, it is in the pr ſence of the holy God, who hath no part with us in o crimes, whoſe nature is removed at the fartheſt diſtan from ſin, and is as contrary to it as can be. There no iniquity with the Lord our God. And therefore, all perſons in the world, we ſhould bluſh to be guilty it before him.

4. We are apt alſo to be aſhamed to do any thing b fore thoſe who diſlike and deteſt what we do. To do wicked action before thoſe who are not offended at i or perhaps take pleaſure in it, is no ſuch matter of ſhan to us. Now, of all others, God is the greateſt hater ſin, and the moſt perfect enemy to it in the whole worl Hab. i. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, an canſt not look on iniquity,* (*i. e.*) with patience, and witl out an infinite hatred and abhorrence of it. Such is th unſpotted purity and perfection of the divine nature, tha it is not poſſible that God ſhould give the leaſt counte nance to any thing that is evil. Pſal. v. 4, 5. *Thou ar not a God,* (ſays David there to him) *that haſt pleaſur in iniquity, neither ſhall evil dwell with thee: The wicke ſhall not ſtand in thy ſight; thou hateſt all the workers o iniquity.*

5. We are aſhamed likewiſe to do any thing that is e vil and unſeemly before thoſe, who, we are afraid, wil publiſh our faults to others, and will make known anc expoſe the folly of them. Now, whenever we ſin, i is before him who will moſt certainly one day bring al our works of darkneſs into the open light, and expoſ all our ſecret deeds of diſhoneſty upon the publick ſtage of the world, and make all the vileſt of our actions known, and lay them open, with all the ſhameful cir- cumſtances of them, before men and angels, to our e- verlaſting ſhame and confuſion. This is the meaning of that proverbial ſpeech, ſo often uſed by our Saviour, *There is nothing covered that ſhall not be revealed, neither hid that ſhall not be made manifeſt.* All the ſins which we now commit with ſo much caution, in ſecret and dark retirements, ſhall in that great day of revelation, when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſcloſed, be ſet

in

in open view, and in so full and strong a light, that all the world shall see them, and that which was plotted and contrived in so much secrecy, and hardly whispered in this world, shall then be proclaimed aloud, and, as it were, upon the house-tops.

6. And lastly, we are ashamed and afraid to commit a fault before those, who we believe will call us to an account for it, and punish us severely. A man may suffer innocently and for a good cause; but all suffering in that case, is by wise and good men esteemed honourable and glorious, and though we are condemned by men, we are acquitted in our own consciences: But that which is properly called punishment is always attended with infamy and reproach; because it always supposeth some fault and crime, as the ground and reason of it. Hence it is that in this world men are not only afraid, but ashamed to commit any fault before those who they think have authority and power to punish it. He is an impudent villain indeed, that will venture to cut a purse in the presence of the Judge.

Now, whenever we commit any wickedness, we do it under the eye of the great Judge of the world, who stedfastly beholds us, and whose omnipotent justice stands by us ready armed and charged for our destruction, and can, in a moment, cut us off. Every sin that we are guilty of, in thought, word, or deed, is all in the presence of the holy, and just, and powerful God; whose power enables him, and whose holiness and justice will effectually engage him, one time or other, if a timely repentance doth not prevent it, to inflict a terrible punishment upon all the workers of iniquity.

You see then, by all that hath been said upon this argument, how shameful a thing sin is, and what confusion of face, the reflection upon our wicked lives ought to cause in all of us. *What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?* If ever we are brought to a true repentance for our sins, it cannot but be a matter of great shame to us.

We find in scripture, that shame doth continually accompany repentance, and is inseparable from it. This is one mark and character of a true penitent, that he is ashamed of what he hath done. Thus Ezra, when he

makes confession of the sins of the people, he testi
and declares his shame for what they had done; *I sa*
O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up mine e
to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over o
heads, and our trespasses are grown up to the heave.
Ezra ix. 6. And may not we of this nation at this d
take these words unto ourselves, considering to what
strange height our sins are grown, and how iniquity
bounds among us? So likewise the Prophet Jeremia
when he would express the repentance of the people
Israel, Jer. iii. 25. *We lie down* (says he) *in our sham*
and our confusion covereth us, because we have sinned
gainst the Lord our God. In like manner the Proph
Daniel, after he had, in the name of the people, mad
an humble acknowledgment of their manifold and grea
sins, he takes shame to himself and them, for them
Dan. ix. 5. *We have sinned,* (says he) *and have commit*
ted iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled i
departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments. O
Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee; but unto us confusion
of face, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to th
inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are
near, and that are far off, through all the countries whi-
ther thou hast driven them, because of their trespass which
they have trespassed against thee: O Lord! to us belongeth
confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our
fathers, because we have sinned against thee. By which
we may judge how considerable and essential a part of
repentance, this holy man esteemed shame for the sins
they had been guilty of, to be. And indeed, upon all
occasions of solemn repentance and humiliation for sin,
this taking shame for their sins is hardly ever omitted, as
if there could be no sincere confession of sin and repen-
tance for it, without testifying their shame and confusion
of face, upon the remembrance of their sins.

Now, to stir up this affection of shame in us, let me
offer to you these three considerations.

I. Consider what great reason we have to be heartily
ashamed of all the sins and offences which we have been
guilty of against God. It was a good old precept of
philosophy, that we should reverence ourselves, (*i. e.*)

That

that we should never do any thing that should be matter of shame and reproach to us afterwards, nothing that misbecomes us, and is unworthy of us.

I have shewn at large, that all sin and vice is a dishonour to our nature, and beneath the dignity of it; that it is a great reproach to our reason, and directly contrary to our true and best interest; that it hath all the aggravating circumstances of infamy and shame; that every sin that was at any time committed by us, was done in the presence of one, whom of all persons in the world we have most reason to reverence, and against him, to whom, of all others, we stand most obliged for the greatest favours, for innumerable benefits, for infinite mercy, and patience, and forbearance towards us, in the presence of the holy and just God, who is at the farthest distance from sin, and the greatest and most implacable enemy to it in the whole world; and who will one day punish all our faults, and expose us to open shame for them; who will bring every work into judgment, and every secret sin that ever we committed, and take vengeance upon us for all our iniquities. So that whenever we sin, we shamefully intreat ourselves, and give the deepest wounds to our reputation in the esteem of him, who is the most competent Judge of what is most truly honourable and praise-worthy, and clothe ourselves with shame and dishonour.

We are ashamed of poverty, because the poor man is despised, and almost ridiculous in the eye of the proud and covetous rich man, whose riches are his high tower, and make him apt to look down upon the poor man that is below him with contempt and scorn; we are ashamed of a dangerous and contagious disease, because all men fly infectious company; but a man may be poor or sick by misfortune; but no man is wicked, but by his own fault and wilful choice. Ill natured and inconsiderate men will be apt to contemn us for our poverty and affliction in any kind, but by our vices we render ourselves odious to God, and to all good and considerate men.

II. Consider that shame for sin now is the way to prevent eternal shame and confusion hereafter. For

this is one great part of the misery of another wo
that the sinner shall then be filled with everlasting sh
and confusion at the remembrance of his faults and
ly. The eternal misery of wicked men is sometime
scripture represented, as if it consisted only or chiefl
the infamy and reproach which will then overwh
them, when all their crimes and faults shall be expo
and laid open to the view of the whole world, D
xii. 2. where the general resurrection of the just and
just is thus described; *Many of them that sleep in the*
of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and so
to everlasting shame and contempt: where everlasting l
and everlasting shame are opposed, as if eternal sha
were a kind of perpetual death.

In this world sinners make a hard shift, by conce
ing or extenuating their faults, as well as they can,
suppress or lessen their shame; they have not now
clear and full a conviction of the evil and folly of the
sin; God is pleased to bear with them, and to spa
them at present, and they do not yet feel the dism
effects and consequences of a wicked life: But in th
next world, when the righteous judgment of God is re
vealed, and the full vials of his wrath shall be poure
forth upon sinners, they shall then be clothed with sham
as with a garment, and be covered with confusion; the
they will feel the folly of their sins, and have a sensibl
demonstration within themselves of the infinite evil o
them; their own consciences will then furiously fly in
their faces, and with the greatest bitterness and rage
upbraid and reproach them with the folly of their own
doings; and so long as we are sensible that we suffer fo
our own folly, so long we must unavoidably be ashamed
of what we have done. So that if sinners shall be ever-
lastingly tormented in another world, it necessarily fol-
lows, that they shall be eternally confounded.

Is it not then better to remember our ways now, and
to be ashamed and repent of them, than to bring ever-
lasting shame and confusion upon ourselves before God,
and angels, and men; This is the argument which
St. John useth to take men off from sin, and to engage
them to holiness and righteousness of life; 1 John ii 28.

That

That when he shall appear, that is, when he shall come to judge the world, *we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*

III. And lastly, consider that nothing sets men at a farther distance from repentance, and all hopes of their becoming better, and brings them nearer to ruin, than impudence in a sinful course. There are too many in the world, who are so far from being ashamed of their wickedness, and blushing at the mention of their faults, that they boast of them, and glory in them. God often complains of this in the people of Israel, as a sad presage of their ruin, and an ill sign of their desperate and irrecoverable condition: Jer. iii. 3. *Thou hadst a whore's forehead, and refusedst to be ashamed;* and Jer. vi. 15. *Were they ashamed, when they committed abominations? Nay, they were not ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall, and in the time that I visit them they shall be cast down.* Hear likewise how the Apostle doth lament the case of such persons as are incurable and past all remedy: Phil. iii. 18, 19. *There are many of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame.* Such persons who glory in that which ought to be their shame, what can their end be but destruction?

There is certainly no greater argument of a degenerate person, and of one that is utterly lost to all sense of goodness, than to be void of shame; and as, on the one hand, they must be very towardly, and well disposed to virtue, who are drawn by ingenuity, and mere sense of obligation and kindness; so, on the other hand, they must be very stupid and insensible, who are not wrought upon by arguments of fear, and sense of shame. There is hardly any hopes of that man who is not to be reclaimed from an evil course, neither by the apprehension of danger, nor of disgrace, and who can, at once, securely neglect both his safety and reputation.

Hear how the Prophet represents the deplorable case of such persons, Isa. iii. 9. *The shew of their countenance bears witness against them;* in the Hebrew it is, *The hardness of their countenance doth testify against them, and they*

they declare their ſin as Sodom, they hide it not. Wo u
their ſouls, for they have rewarded evil to themſelv
When men are once arrived to that pitch of impiety,
to harden their foreheads againſt all ſenſe and ſhew
ſhame, and ſo as to be able to ſet a good face upon t
fouleſt matter in the world; *wo unto them*, becauſe th
caſe ſeems then to be deſperate, and paſt all hopes of r
covery. For who can hope that a man will forſake l
ſins, when he is not ſo much as aſhamed of them? B
yet one would think, that thoſe that are not aſham
of their impiety, ſhould be aſhamed of their impudenc
and ſhould, at leaſt, bluſh at this, that they can do th
vileſt and the moſt ſhameful things in the world witho
bluſhing.

To conclude this whole diſcourſe, let the conſiderat
on of the evil and ſhamefulneſs of ſin have this double effe
upon us, to make us heartily aſhamed of the paſt erro
and miſcarriages of our lives, and firmly reſolved to d
better for the future.

1. To be heartily aſhamed of the paſt errors of ou
lives. So often as we reflect upon the manifold and hei
nous provocations of the divine majeſty, which man
of us have been guilty of in the long courſe of a wicke
life, together with the heavy aggravations of our ſins
by all the circumſtances that can render them abomi
nable and ſhameful, not only in the eye of God and men
but of our own conſciences likewiſe; we have great rea
ſon to humble ourſelves before God, in a penitent ac
knowledgment of them, and every one of us to ſay with
Job, *Behold, I am vile, what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will*
lay mine hand upon my mouth, I abhor myſelf, and repent
in duſt and aſhes; and with Ezra, *O my God, I am a-*
ſhamed, and bluſh to lift up my face to thee, my God; for
our iniquities are increaſed over our heads, and our treſ-
paſs is grown up unto the heavens: And now, O my God,
what ſhall we ſay after this? for we have forſaken thy com-
mandments; and with holy Daniel, *We have ſinned, and*
have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly; O Lord!
righteouſneſs belongeth unto thee, but unto us confuſion of
face. Thus we ſhould reproach and upbraid ourſelves in
the preſence of that holy God, whom we have ſo often
and ſo highly offended, and againſt whom we have done

as

evil things as we could, and say with the prodigal son in the parable; *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*

If we would thus take shame to ourselves, and humble ourselves before God, he would *be merciful to us miserable sinners;* he would *take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously;* and so soon as ever he saw us coming towards him, would meet us with joy, and embrace us in the arms of his mercy. And then,

2. As we should be heartily ashamed of the past errors and miscarriages of our lives, so we should firmly resolve, by God's grace, to do better for the future; never to consent to iniquity, or to do any thing which we are convinced is contrary to our duty, and which will be matter of shame to us, when we come to look back upon it, and make our blood to rise in our faces at the mention or intimation of it; which will make us to sneak, and *hang down our heads,* when we are twitted and upbraided with it, and which, if it be not prevented by a timely humiliation and repentance, will fill us with horror and amazement, with shame and confusion of face, both at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.

So that when we look into our lives, and examine the actions of them, when we consider what we have done, and what our doings have deserved, we should, in a due sense of the great and manifold miscarriages of our lives, and from a deep sorrow, and shame, and detestation of ourselves for them; I say, we should, with that true penitent described in Job, take words to ourselves, and say, *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more; that which I know not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniqnity, I will do no more.* And thus I have done with the second inconvenience of a sinful and vitious course of life, *viz.* that the reflection upon it afterwards causeth shame; *What fruit had you then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?*

SER-

SERMON CLXV.

The final issue of sin, an argument for repentan

ROM. vi. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are n ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But n being made free from sin, and become servants to God, have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlast life.

The third sermom on this text.

THese words are a comparison between an holy a virtuous, and a sinful and vitious course of l and set before us the manifest inconveniencies of the o and the manifold advantages of the other. I have e tered into a discourse upon the first of these heads, v the manifest inconveniencies of a sinful and vitious cour and the text mentions these three.

I. That it is unprofitable.

II. That the reflection upon it afterwards is matter shame. These two I have spoken largely to. I shall n proceed to the

III. And last inconvenience, which the text mentio of a sinful and vitious course of life, *viz.* that the final is and consequence of these things is very dismal and mis able; *the end of those things is death.* No fruit then wh ye did those things; shame now that you come to refl upon them; and misery and death at the last.

There are indeed almost innumerable consideratio and arguments to discourage and deter men from sin the unreasonableness of it in itself; the injustice, and d loyalty, and ingratitude of it in respect to God; the example of it to others; the cruelty of it to ourselve the shame and dishonour that attends it; the grief a sorro

orrow which it will cost us, if ever we be brought to a ue sense of it; the trouble and horror of a guilty conscience, that will perpetually haunt us; but, above all, the isérable event and sad issue of a wicked course of life ontinued in, and finally unrepented of. The temptations to sin may be alluring enough, and look upon us vith a smiling countenance, and the commission may fford us a short and imperfect pleasure, but the remembrance of it will certainly be bitter, and the end of it niserable.

And this consideration is, of all others, the most apt o work upon the generality of men, especially upon the nore obstinate and obdurate sort of sinners, and those whom no other arguments will penetrate; that whatever the present pleasure and advantage of sin may be, it will be bitterness and misery in the end.

The two former inconveniencies of a sinful course which I have lately discoursed of, *viz.* that sin is unprofitable, and that it is shameful, are very considerable, and ought to be great arguments against it to every sinner and considerate man: and yet how light are they, and but as the very small dust upon the balance, in comparision of that insupportable weight of misery which will oppress the sinner at last! *Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil.* This, this is the sting of all, that *the end of these things is death.*

It is very usual in scripture, to express the greatest happiness, and the greatest misery, by life and death; life being the first and most desirable of all other blessings, because it is the foundation of them, and that which makes us capable of all the rest. Hence we find in scripture, that all the blessings of the gospel are summed up in this one word, John xx. 31. *These things are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.* 1 John iv. 9. *In this was manifest the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* So that, under this term or notion of life, the scripture is wont to express all happiness to us, and more especially that eternal life which is the great promise of the gospel. And this

this is life by way of eminency; as if this frail, and m
tal, and miserable life, which we live here in this wo
did not deserve that name.

And, on the other hand, all the evils which are c
sequent upon sin, especially the dreadful and lasting r
sery of another world, are called by the name of dea
the end of these things is death. So the Apostle, here
the text, and ver. 23. *The wages of sin is death,* r
only a temporal death, but such a death as is opposed
eternal life; *the wages of sin is death: but the gift of G*
is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. So that *dea*
here in the text is plainly intended to comprehend in
all those fearful and astonishing miseries wherewith t
wrath of God will pursue and afflict sinners in anoth
world.

But what and how great this misery is, I am not ab
to declare to you; *it hath* no more *entered into the hea*
of man, than those great and glorious things which *G*
hath laid up for them that love him; and as I would fa
hope, that none of us here shall ever have the sad exp
rience of it; so none but those who have felt it, are ab
to give a tolerable description of the intolerableness of i

But by what the scripture hath said of it in genera
and in such metaphors as are most level to our presen
capacity, it appears so full of terror, that I am loth t
attempt the representation of it. There are so many o
ther arguments that are more human and natural, an
more proper to work upon the reason and ingenuity o
men; as the great love and kindness of God to us; th
grievous sufferings of his Son for us; the unreasonable
ness and shamefulness of sin; the present benefit and ad
vantage, the peace and pleasure of an holy and virtu
ous life; and the mighty rewards promised to it in ano
ther world, that one would think these should be abun
dantly sufficient to prevail with men to gain them to
goodness, and that they need not be frighted into it, and
to have the law laid to them, as it was once given to the
people of Israel, *in thunder and lightening, in blackness, in*
darkness and tempest, so as to make them *exceedingly to*
fear and tremble. And it seems a very hard case, that
when

nen we have to deal with men ſenſible enough of their tereſt in other caſes, and diligent enough to mind it, e cannot perſuade them to accept of happineſs, without tting before them the terrors of eternal darkneſs, and oſe amazing and endleſs miſeries which will certainly the portion of thoſe who refuſe ſo great an happineſs: is, I ſay, ſeems very hard, that men muſt be carried the gate of hell, before they can be brought to ſet eir faces towards heaven, and to think in good earneſt getting thither.

And yet it cannot be diſſembled, that the nature of en is ſo degenerate as to ſtand in need of this argument; nd that men are ſo far engaged in an evil courſe, that ney are not to be reclaimed from it by any other conſi-eration, but of the endleſs and unſpeakable miſery of npenitent ſinners in another world. And therefore God, nowing how neceſſary this is, doth frequently make uſe it; and our bleſſed Saviour, than whom none was e-er more mild and gentle, doth often ſet this conſidera-on before men, to take them off from ſin, and to bring em to do better. And this, St. Paul tells us, Rom. i. 3. is one principal thing which renders the goſpel ſo owerful an inſtrument for the reforming and ſaving of ankind, becauſe *therein the wrath of God is revealed om heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of en.*

So that how harſh and unpleaſant ſoever this argument ay be, the great ſtupidity and folly of ſome men, and eir inveterate obſtinacy in an evil courſe, makes it ne-eſſary for us to preſs it home, that thoſe who will not e moved, and made ſenſible of the danger and incon-enience of ſin by gentler arguments, may be rouſed and wakened by the terrors of eternal miſery.

That the laſt iſſue and conſequence of a wicked life ill be very miſerable, the general apprehenſion of man-ind concerning the fate of bad men in another world, nd the ſecret miſgivings of mens conſciences, gives men oo much ground to fear. Beſides that the juſtice of di-ine providence, which is not many times in this world o clear and manifeſt, does ſeem to require that there hould be a time of recompence, when the virtue and pa-ience of good men ſhould be rewarded, and the inſolence

and obstinacy of bad men should be punished. This c
not but appear very reasonable to any man that co
ders the nature of God, and is persuaded that he gove
the world, and hath given laws to mankind, by the
servance whereof they may be happy, and by the neg
and contempt whereof they must be miserable.

But that there might remain no doubts upon the mi
of men concerning these matters, God hath been plea
to reveal this from heaven by a person sent by him
purpose to declare it to the world; and to the truth
these doctrines concerning a future state, and a day
judgment, and recompences, God hath given testimc
by unquestionable miracles wrought for the confirmati
of them, and particularly by *the resurrection of Je*
Christ from the dead, whereby he hath given an assura
unto all men, that he is the person *ordained by God to jud*
the world in righteousness, and to render to every man
cording to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance
well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortali
eternal life; but to them who obey not the truth, but ol
unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation a
anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil.

So that how quietly soever wicked men may p
through this world, or out of it, which they seldom d
misery will certainly overtake their sins at last; unspea
able and intolerable misery arising from the anguish
a guilty conscience, from a lively apprehension of th
sad loss, and from a quick sense of the sharp pain whi
they labour under; and all this aggravated, and set
with the consideration of past pleasure, and the desp
of future ease. Each of these is misery enough, and a
of them together do constitute and make up that dism
and forlorn state, which the scripture calls hell and dan
nation.

I shall therefore briefly represent, for it is by no mea
desirable to dwell long upon so melancholy and frightf
an argument.

1. The principal ingredients which constitute this m
serable state. And,

2. The aggravations of it.

Firs

First, The principal ingredients which conſtitute this miſerable ſtate; and they are theſe three which I have mentioned.

1. The anguiſh of a guilty mind.

2. The lively apprehenſions of the invaluable happineſs which they have loſt.

3. A quick ſenſe of the intolerable pains which they lie under.

I. The anguiſh of a guilty conſcience. And this is natural; for there is a worm that abides in a guilty conſcience, and is continually gnawing it. This is that our Saviour calls *the worm that dies not*. And though God ſhould inflict no poſitive puniſhment upon ſinners, yet this is a revenge which every man's mind would take upon him; for things are ſo ordered by God in the original frame and conſtitution of our minds, that, on the one hand, peace and pleaſure, contentment and ſatisfaction do naturally ariſe in our minds from the conſcience of well-doing, and ſpring up in the ſoul of every good man; and, on the other hand, no man knowingly does an evil action, but his guilty conſcience galls him for it, and the remembrance of it is full of bitterneſs to him.

And this the ſinner feels in this world; he diſguiſeth and diſſembleth his trouble as much as he can, and ſhifts off theſe uneaſy thoughts by all the diverſions he can deviſe, and by this means palliates his diſeaſe, and renders his condition in ſome ſort tolerable unto himſelf: but when he is alone, or caſt upon the bed of ſickneſs, and his thoughts are let looſe upon him, and he hath nothing to give them a diverſion, how does his guilt ferment and work! and the fever, which lurked before, does now ſhew itſelf, and is ready to burn him up; ſo that nothing can appear more diſmal and ghaſtly, than ſuch a man does to himſelf.

And much more, when ſinners come into the other world, and are entered into the regions of darkneſs, and the melancholy ſhades where evil ſpirits are continually wandering up and down, where they can meet with nothing either of employment or pleaſure, to give the leaſt diverſion to their penſive minds; where they ſhall find nothing to do, but to reflect upon and bemoan themſelves;

selves; where all the wicked actions that ever they co mitted shall come fresh into their minds, and stare th consciences in the face: It is not to be imagined wh sad scenes will then be present to their imaginations, a what sharp reflections their own guilty minds will ma upon them, and what swarms of furies will possess the

So soon as ever they are entered upon that state, th will then find themselves forsaken of all those comfor which they once placed so much happiness in; and th will have nothing to converse with but their own unea selves, and those that are as miserable as themselves, an therefore uncapable of administring any comfort to or another. They will then have nothing to think on bu what will trouble them; and every new thought wi be a new increase of their trouble. Their guilt wi make them restless, and the more restless they are, th more will their minds be enraged; and there will be n end of their vexation, because the cause and ground of i is perpetual. For there is no possible way to get rid c guilt but by repentance, and there is no encouragement no argument to repentance where there is no hope o pardon. So that if God should hold his hand, and leav sinners to themselves, and to the lashes of their own con science, a more severe and terrible torment can hardly be imagined, than that which a guilty mind would exe cute upon itself.

II. Another ingredient into the miseries of sinners in another world, is the lively apprehension of the inva luable happiness which they have lost by their own obstinacy and foolish choice. In the next world wicked men shall be for ever separated from God, who is the fountain of happiness, and from all the comforts of his presence and favour. This, our Saviour tells us, is the first part of that dreadful sentence that shall be passed upon the wicked at the great day; *depart from me:* which words, though they do not signify any positive infliction and torment, yet they import the greatest loss that can be imagined. And it is not so easy to deter mine which is the greatest of evils, loss or pain. In deed to a creature that is only endowed with sense, there can be no misery but that of pain and suffering: but to those

those who have reason and understanding, and are capable of knowing the value of things, and of reflecting upon themselves in the want of them, the greatest loss may be as grievous and hard to be born as the greatest pain.

It is true, that sinners are now so immersed in the gross and sensual delights of this world, that they have no apprehension of the joys of heaven, and the pleasures of God's presence, and of the happiness that is to be enjoyed in communion with him, and therefore they are not now capable of estimating the greatness of this loss. But this insensibleness of wicked men continues no longer than this present state, which affords them variety of objects of pleasure and of business to divert them, and entertain them: But when they come into the other world, they shall then have nothing else to think upon, but the sad condition into which they have brought themselves, nothing to do but to pore and meditate upon their own misfortune, when they shall lift up their eyes, and with the rich man in the parable, in the midst of their torments, look up to those who are in Abraham's bosom; and their misery will be mightily increased by the contemplation of that happiness which others enjoy, and themselves have so foolishly forfeited and fallen short of; insomuch, that it would be happy for them, if that God from who e presence they are banished, that heaven, from which they have excluded themselves, and that everlasting glory which they have despised and neglected, might be for ever hid from their eyes, and never come into their minds.

III. This is not all, but besides the sad apprehension of their loss, they shall endure the sharpest pains. These God hath threatened sinners withal, and they are in scripture represented to us by the most grievous and intolerable pains that in this world we are acquainted withal, as by the pain of burning. Hence the wicked are said *to be cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, and into the fire which is not quenched;* which, whether it be literally to be understoood or not, is certainly intended to signify the most severe kind of torment; but what that is, and in what manner it shall be inflicted, none know but they that feel it, and lie under it. The scripture tells so much in general of it, as is

enough to warn men to avoid it: that it is the effect a mighty displeasure, and of anger armed with omnip tence, and consequently must needs be very terribl more dreadful than we can now conceive, and probab greater than can be described by any of those pains ar sufferings which now we are acquainted withal; for *w knows the power of God's anger*, and the utmost of wh almighty justice can do to sinners! Who can comprehen the vast significancy of those expressions, *Fear him, wh after he hath killed, can destroy both body and soul in hell* and again, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of th living God?* One would think this were misery enough and needed no farther aggravation; and yet it hath two terrible ones, from the consideration of past plea sures which sinners have enjoyed in this world, and fron an utter despair of future ease and remedy.

1. From the consideration of the past pleasures which sinners have enjoyed in this life. This will make their sufferings much more sharp and sensible; for, as nothing commends pleasure more, and gives happiness a quicker taste and relish, than precedent sufferings and pain, there is not, perhaps, a greater pleasure in the world, than the strange and sudden ease which a man finds after a sharp fit of the stone or cholick, or after a man is taken off the rack, and nature, which was in an agony before, is all at once set at perfect ease: So on the other hand, nothing exasperates suffering more, and sets a keener edge upon misery, than to step into afflictions and pain, immediately out of a state of great ease and pleasure. This we find in the parable was the great aggravation of the rich man's torment, that he had first *received good things*, and was afterwards tormented. We may do well to consider this, that those pleasures of sin, which have now so much of temptation in them, will in the next world be one of the chief aggravations of our torment.

2. The greatest aggravation of this misery will be, that it is attended with the despair of any future ease; and when misery and despair meet together, they make a man compleatly miserable. The duration of this misery, is expressed to us in scripture, by such words as are used to signify the longest and most interminable duration.

ation. *Depart ye curſed into everlaſting fire,* Matth. xv. 41. *Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,* Mark ix. 43. And 2 Theſſ. i. 7. it is there ſaid, hat thoſe *who know not God, and obey not the goſpel of his Son, ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.* And n Rev. xx. 10. *That the wicked ſhall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.* And what can be imagined beyond this? This is the perfection of miſery, to lie under the greateſt torment, and yet be in deſpair of ever finding the leaſt eaſe.

And thus I have done with the firſt thing I propounded to ſpeak to from this text, *viz.* the manifeſt inconveniencies of a ſinful and vitious courſe of life; that it brings no preſent benefit or advantage to us; that the reflection upon it cauſeth ſhame; and that it is fearful and miſerable in the laſt iſſue and conſequence of it. *What fruit had you,* &c.

I ſhould now have proceeded to the ſecond part of the text, which repreſents to us the manifold advantages of an holy and virtuous courſe of life; ver. 22. *But now being made free from ſin, and become the ſervants of righteouſneſs, ye have your fruit unto holineſs;* there is the preſent advantage of it; *and the end everlaſting life;* there is the future reward of it. But this is a large argument, which will require a diſcourſe by itſelf; and therefore I ſhall not now enter upon it; but ſhall only make ſome reflections upon what hath been ſaid, concerning the miſerable iſſue and conſequence of a wicked life impenitently perſiſted in.

And ſurely if we firmly believe, and ſeriouſly conſider theſe things, we have no reaſon to be fond of any vice; we can take no great comfort or contentment in a ſinful courſe. If we could, for the ſeeming advantage, and ſhort pleaſure of ſome ſins, diſpenſe with the temporal miſchiefs and inconveniencies of them, which yet I cannot ſee how any prudent and conſiderate man could do: if we could conquer ſhame, and bear the infamy and reproach which attends moſt ſins, and could digeſt the upbraidings of our own conſciences, ſo often as we call them to remembrance, and reflect ſeriouſly upon them; though, for the gratifying an importunate inclination,

and

and an impetuous appetite, all the inconveniencies of the might be born withal: Yet methinks, the very thoug of the end and issue of a wicked life, that *the end of the things is death, that indignation and wrath, tribulati and anguish,* far greater than we can now describe or magine, *shall be to every soul of man that doth evil,* shoul over-rule us. Though the violence of an irregular lust an desire are able to bear down all other arguments; y methinks, the eternal interest of our precious and immo tal souls should still lie near our hearts, and affect us ve ry sensibly. Methinks the consideration of anothe world, and of all eternity, and of that dismal fate whic attends impenitent sinners after this life, and the dreadf hazard of being miserable for ever, should be more tha enough to dishearten any man from a wicked life, an to bring him to a better mind and course.

And if the plain representations of these things do no prevail with men to this purpose, it is a sign that eithe they do not believe these things, or else that they do no consider them; one of these two must be the reason why any man, notwithstanding these terrible threatenings o God's word, does venture to continue in an evil course

It is vehemently to be suspected, that men do not really believe these things, that they are not fully persuaded that there is another state after this life, in which the righteous God *will render to every man according to his deeds:* And therefore so much wickedness as we see in the lives of men, so much infidelity may reasonably be suspected to lie lurking in their hearts. They may, indeed, seemingly profess to believe these things; but he that would know what a man inwardly and firmly believes, should attend rather to his actions than to his verbal professions: For if any man lives so, as no man that believes the principles of the Christian religion in reason can live, there is too much reason to question whether that man doth believe his religion; he may say he does, but there is a far greater evidence in the case than words; the actions of the man are by far the most credible declarations of the inward sense and persuasion of his mind.

Did

Did men firmly and heartily believe that there is a God that governs the world, and regards the actions of men, and that *he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness*, and that all mankind shall appear before him in that day, and every action that they have done in their whole lives shall be brought upon the stage, and pass a strict examination and censure, and that those who have made conscience of their duty to God and men, and have *lived soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*, shall be unspeakably and eternally happy in the next; but those who have lived lewd and licentious lives, and persisted in an impenitent course, shall be extremely and everlastingly miserable, without pity, and without comfort, and without remedy, and without hope of ever being otherwise; I say, if men were fully and firmly persuaded of these things, it is not credible, it is hardly possible, that they should live such profane and impious, such careless and dissolute lives, as we daily see a great part of mankind do.

That man that can be awed from his duty, or tempted to sin by any of the pleasures or terrors of this world, that for the present enjoyment of his lusts can be contented to venture his soul, what greater evidence than this can there be, that this man does not believe the threatenings of the gospel, and how *fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God?* That man that can be willing to undergo an hard service for several years, that he may be in a way to get an estate, and be rich in this world; and yet will not be persuaded to restrain himself of his liberty, or to deny his pleasure, or to check his appetite or lust, for the greatest reward that God can promise, or the severest punishment that he can threaten; can any man reasonably think, that this man is persuaded of any such happiness or misery after this life, as is plainly revealed in the gospel, that *verily there is a reward for the righteous, and verily there is a God that judgeth the earth?* For what can he that believes not one syllable of the bible do worse than this comes to?

A strong and vigorous faith, even in temporal cases, is a powerful principle of action, especially if it be backed

ed and enforced with arguments of fear. He that belie
the reality of a thing, and that it is good for him, a
that it may be attained, and that if he doth attain it,
will make him very happy, and that without it he sh
be extremely miserable; such a belief and persuasion w
put a man upon difficult things, and make him to p
forth a vigourous endeavour, and to use a mighty ind
stry for the obtaining of that, concerning which he is th
persuaded.

And the faith of the gospel ought to be so much tl
more powerful, by how much the objects of hope ar
fear, which it presents to us, are greater and more co
siderable. Did men fully believe the happiness of he
ven, and the torments of hell, and were they as verily
persuaded of the truth of them, as if they were befo
their eyes, how insignificant would all the terrors an
temptations of sense be to draw them into sin, and se
duce them from their duty?

But although it seems very strange, and almost incre
dible, that men should believe these things, and ye
live wicked and impious lives; yet, because I have n
mind, and God knows there is no need to increase th
number of infidels in this age, I shall chuse rather to im
pute a great deal of the wickedness that is in the world
to the inconsiderateness of men, than to their unbelief.
I will grant that they do in some sort believe these things,
or, at least, that they do not disbelieve them; and then
the great cause of mens ruin must be, that they do not
attend to the consequence of this belief, and how men
ought to live that are thus persuaded. Men stifle their
reason, and suffer themselves to be hurried away by sense
into the embraces of sensual objects, and things present,
but do not consider what the end of these things will be,
and what is like to become of them hereafter; for it is
not to be imagined but that man, who shall calmly con-
sider with himself what sin is, the shortness of its plea-
sure, and the eternity of its punishment, should seriously
resolve upon a better course of life.

And why do we not consider these things which are
of so infinite concernment to us? What have we our
reason for, but to reflect upon ourselves, and to mind
what

what we do, and wisely to compare things together, and, upon the whole matter, to judge what makes most for our true and lasting interest? To consider our whole selves, our souls as well as our bodies; and our whole duration not only in this world, but in the other, not only with regard to time, but to eternity? To look before us to the last issue and event of our actions, and to the farthest consequence of them, and to reckon upon what will be hereafter, as well as what is present; and if we suspect, or hope, or fear, especially if we have good reason to believe a future state after death, in which we shall be happy or miserable to all eternity, according as we manage and behave ourselves in this world, to resolve to make it our greatest design and concernment while we are in this world, so to live and demean ourselves, that we may be of the number of those that shall be accounted worthy to escape that misery, and to obtain that happiness, which will last and continue for ever.

And if men would but apply their minds seriously to the consideration of these things, they could not act so imprudently as they do; they would not live so by chance and without design, taking the pleasure that comes next, and avoiding the present evils which press upon them, without any regard to those that are future, and at a distance, though they be infinitely greater and more considerable: if men could have the patience to debate and argue these matters with themselves, they could not live so preposterously as they do, preferring their bodies before their souls, and the world before God, and the things which are temporal before the things that are eternal.

Did men verily, and in good earnest, believe but half of that to be true which hath now been declared to you, concerning the miserable state of impenitent sinners in another world; and I am very sure, that the one half of that which is true concerning that state hath not been told you; I say, did we in any measure believe what hath been so imperfectly represented, *What manner of persons should we all be, in all holy conversation and godliness, waiting for and hastening unto* (that is, making haste to make the

the best preparation we could for) *the coming of the d. of God!*

I will conclude all with our Saviour's exhortatic to his disciples, and to all others; *Watch ye therefore, an pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape a these things, and to stand before the Son of man: To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glo ry, world without end.* Amen.

SERMON CLXVI.

The present and future advantage of an holy and virtuous life.

ROM. vi. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in these things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

The fourth sermon on this text.

I Have several times told you, that the Apostle in these words makes a comparison between an holy and virtuous, and a sinful and vitious course of life, and sets before us the manifest inconveniencies of the one, and the manifold advantages of the other.

I have finished my discourse upon the first part of the comparison; the manifest inconveniencies of a sinful and vitious course. I proceed now to the other part of the comparison, which was the

Second thing I propounded to speak to from these words, *viz.* the manifold benefits and advantages of an holy and virtuous course; and that upon these two accounts.

1. Of the present benefit and advantage of it, which the Apostle here calls fruit; *Ye have your fruit unto holiness.*

2. In

2. In respect of the future reward of it, *and the end everlasting life.* So that here is a considerable earnest in hand, besides a mighty recompence afterwards, infinitely beyond the proportion of our best actions and services, both in regard of the greatness and duration of it, everlasting life; that is, for a few transient acts of obedience, a perfect, and immutable, and endless state of happiness. And these two the Apostle mentions, in opposition to the inconveniencies and evil consequences of a wicked and vitious course; *What fruit had you then in those things?* &c.

But, before I come to speak to these two particulars, I shall take notice of the description which the Apostle here makes of the change from a state of sin and vice to a state of holiness and virtue. *But now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God;* intimating that the state of sin is a state of servitude and slavery, from which repentance, and the change which is thereby made, does set us free; *But now being made free from sin.* And so our Saviour tells us, that *whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin;* and this is the vilest and hardest slavery in the world, because it is the servitude of the soul, the best and noblest part of ourselves; it is the subjection of our reason, which ought to rule and bear sway over the inferior faculties, to our sensual appetites and brutish passions; which is as uncomely a sight, as to see beggars ride on horse-back, and Princes walk on foot. And as inferior persons, when they are advanced to power, are strangely insolent and tyrannical towards those that are subject to them; so the lusts and passions of men, when they once get the command of them, are the most domineering tyrants in the world; and there is no such slave as a man that is subject to his appetite and lust, that is under the power of irregular passions and vitious inclinations, which transport and hurry him to the vilest and most unreasonable things. For a wicked man is a slave to as many masters as he hath passions and vices; and they are very imperious and exacting; and the more he yields to them, the more they grow upon him, and exercise the greater tyranny over him: and being subject to so many masters, the poor slave is continually divided and distracted

between their contrary commands and impositions; passion hurries him one way, and another as violen drives him another; one lust commands him upon a service, and another, it may be, at the same ti calls him to another work. His pride and ambit bids him spend and lay it out, whilst his covetous holds his hand fast closed; so that he knows not, m times, how to dispose of himself, or what to do, must displease some of his masters, and what inclinat soever he contradicts, he certainly displeaseth himself.

And that which aggravates the misery of his condit is, that he voluntarily submits to this servitude. In ther cases men are made slaves against their wills, are brought under the force and power of others wh they are not able to resist; but the sinner chuseth t servitude, and willingly puts his neck under this yo There are few men in the world so sick of their liber and so weary of their own happiness as to chuse this co dition; but the sinner sells himself, and voluntarily pa with that liberty which he might keep, and which no could take from him.

And which makes this condition yet more intolerab he makes himself a slave to his own servants, to th who are born to be subject to him, to his own appeti and passions; and this, certainly, is the worst kind slavery, so much worse than that of mines and galli as the soul is more noble and excellent than the body.

Men are not usually so sensible of the misery of th kind of servitude, because they are governed by sen more than reason; but, according to a true judgme and estimation of things, a vitious course of life is th saddest slavery of all others. And therefore the gosp represents it as a design every way worthy of the Sc of God, to come down from heaven, and to debase hin self so far as to assume our nature, and to submit to th death of the cross, on purpose to rescue us from this slav ry, and to assert us into the liberty of the sons of Goo And this is the great design of the doctrine of the go spel, to free men from the bondage of their lusts, an to bring them to the service of God, whose service is per fect freedom. And therefore our Saviour tells us, Joh viii

viii. 31. 32 that *if we continue in his word, i. e.* if we obey his doctrine, and frame our lives according to it, it will make us free; *Ye shall know,* says he, *the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* And if we observe it, the scripture delights very much to set forth to us the benefits and advantages of the Christian religion, by the metaphor of liberty and redemption from captivity and slavery. Hence our Saviour is so often called the Redeemer and Deliverer, and is said to have obtained eternal redemption for us. And the publishing of the gospel is compared to the proclaiming of the year of Jubilee among the Jews, when all persons that would were set at liberty. Isa. lxi. 1, 2. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,* saith the Prophet, speaking in the person of the Messiah, *because he hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.* And it is probable that upon this account likewise the Christian doctrine or law is by St James called the royal law of liberty.

This is the great design of Christianity, to set men free from the slavery of their lusts; and to this end the Apostle tells us, Tit. ii. 13. that *Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* And herein the great mercy and compassion of God towards mankind appeared, in that he sent his Son to rescue us from that servitude which we had long groaned under, that being made free from sin, we might become the servants of God, and the servants of righteousness.

And this he hath done, not only by the price of his blood, but by the power and purity of his doctrine, and the holy example of his life, and by all those considerations which represent to us the misery of our sinful state, and the infinite danger of continuing in it: and, on the other hand, by setting before us the advantages of a religious and holy life, and what a blessed change we make, when we quit the service of sin, and become the servants of God. It will not only be a mighty present benefit to us, but will make us happy to all eterni-

ty; and these are the two considerations which, at first I propounded to speak to at this time.

1. The present benefit of an holy and virtuous life which the Apostle here calls fruit: *But now, being free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness.*

2. The future reward and recompence of it; *and the end everlasting life.*

First, Let us consider the present benefit and advantage of an holy and virtuous life, which the Apostle here calls fruit. If all things be truly considered, there is no advantage comes to any man by a wicked and vitious course of life. A wicked life is no present advantage; the reflection upon it afterwards is shameful and troublesome; and the end of it miserable. But, on the contrary, the advantages of an holy and good life are many and great even in this world, and upon temporal accounts, abstracting from the consideration of a future reward in the world to come.

I shall instance in five or six eminent advantages which it usually brings to men in this world.

1. It brings great peace and contentment of mind.

2. It it is a very fit and proper means to promote our outward temporal interest.

3. It tends to the lengthening our days, and hath frequently the blessing of long life attending upon it.

4. It gives a man great peace and comfort when he comes to die.

5. After death it transmits a good name and reputation to posterity.

6. It derives a blessing upon our posterity after us. And these are certainly the greatest blessings that a wise man can aim at, and design to himself in this world. Every one of these, taken severally, is very considerable; but all of them together compleat a man's temporal felicity, and raise it to as high a pitch as is to be expected in this world.

1. A religious and virtuous course of life is the best way to peace and contentment of mind, and does commonly bring it. And to a wise man, that knows how to value the ease and satisfaction of his own mind, there cannot be a greater temptation to religion and virtue, than to con-

onſider that it is the beſt and only way to give reſt to his mind. And this is preſent fruit, and ready payment; because it immediately follows, or rather accompanies the diſcharge of our duty. *The fruit of righteouſneſs is peace*, ſaith the Prophet; and the Apoſtle to the Hebrews ſpeaks of *the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs*, meaning that inward peace which a righteous man hath in his own mind.

A man needs not take pains, or to uſe many arguments, to ſatisfy and content his own mind, after he hath done a good action, and to convince himſelf, that he hath no cauſe to be troubled for it, for peace and pleaſure do naturally ſpring from it: nay, not only ſo, but there is an unexpreſſible kind of pleaſure and delight that flows from the teſtimony of a good conſcience. Let but a man take care to ſatisfy himſelf in the doing of his duty, and whatever troubles and ſtorms may be raiſed from without, all will be clear and calm within: for nothing but guilt can trouble a man's mind, and fright his conſcience, and make him uneaſy to himſelf; that indeed will wound his ſpirit, and ſting his very ſoul, and make him full of fearful and tormenting thoughts. This Cain found after he had committed that crying ſin of murdering his brother. Gen. iv. 6. *The Lord ſaid unto Cain, why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen?* His guilt made him full of wrath, and diſcontent filled his mind with vexation, and his countenance with ſhame and confuſion. When a man's conſcience is awakened to a ſenſe of his guilt, it is angry and froward, and harder to be ſtilled than a peeviſh child; but the practice of holineſs and virtue does produce juſt the contrary effects; it fills a man's mind with pleaſure, and makes his countenance chearful.

And this certainly, if it be well conſidered, is no ſmall and contemptible advantage. The peace and tranquillity of our minds is the great thing which all the philoſophy and wiſdom of the world did always deſign to bring men to, as the very utmoſt happineſs that a wiſe man is capable of in this life: and it is that which no conſiderate man would part with for all that this world

can give him. The greatest fortune in this world ought to be no temptation to any man in his wits, to submit to perpetual sickness and pain for the gaining of it; and yet there is no disease in the world, that, for the sharpness of it, is comparable to the sting of a guilty mind, and no pleasure equal to that of innocence and a good conscience. And this naturally springs up in the mind of a good man, where it is not hindered either by a melancholy temper, or by false principles in religion, which fill a man with groundless fears and jealousies of the love and favour of God towards him; and excepting these two cases, this is the ordinary fruit of an holy and good course, which is not interrupted by frequent falling into sin, and great omissions and violations of our duty: for, in this case the interruptions of our peace and comfort will naturally be answerable to the inequality of our obedience.

II. Besides the present and inestimable fruit of holiness, the quiet and satisfaction of our own minds; it is likewise a proper means to promote our interest and happiness in this world. For as every vice is naturally attended with some temporal inconvenience of pain or loss; so there is no grace or virtue, but does apparently conduce to a man's temporal felicity. There are some virtues which tend to the health of his body, and the prolonging of his life, as temperance and chastity; others tend to riches and plenty, as diligence and industry in our callings; others to the secure and peaceable enjoyment of what we have, as truth and fidelity, justice and honesty, in all our dealings and intercourse with men. There are other virtues that are apt to oblige mankind to us, and to gain their friendship and good-will, their aid and assistance, as kindness and meekness, and charity, and a generous disposition to do good to all, as far as we have power and opportunity. In a word, there is no real interest of this world, but may ordinarily be as effectually promoted, and pursued to as great advantage, by a man that exercises himself in the practice of all virtue and goodness, and usually to far greater advantage, than by one that is intemperate and debauched deceitful and dishonest, apt to disoblige and provoke, sour and ill-natured to all mankind: for there

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is none of these vices but is to a man's real hinderance and disadvantage, in regard of one kind of happiness or another, which men aim at, and propose to themselves in this world.

III. A religious and virtuous course of life doth naturally tend to the prolonging of our days, and hath very frequently the blessing of health and long life attending upon it. The practice of a great many virtues is a great preservative of life and health, as the due government of our appetites and passions by temperance, and chastity, and meekness, which prevent the chief causes from within of bodily diseases and distempers; the due government of our tongues and conversation in respect of others, by justice and kindness, and abstaining from wrath and provocation, which are a great security against the dangers of outward violence, according to that of St. Peter, 1 Epist. iii. 10. *He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good, let him seek peace and ensue it.*

And besides the natural tendency of things, there is a special blessing of God which attends good men, and makes *their days long in the land which the Lord their God hath given them.*

IV. There is nothing gives a man so much comfort when he comes to die, as the reflection upon an holy and good life: and then surely, above all other times, comfort is most valuable, because our frail and infirm nature doth then stand most in need of it. Then usually mens hearts are faint, and their spirits low, and every thing is apt to deject and trouble them; so that we had need to provide ourselves of some excellent cordial against that that time; and there is no comfort like to that of a clear conscience, and of an innocent and useful life. This will revive and raise a man's spirits under all the infirmities of his body, because it gives a man good hopes concerning his eternal state, and the hopes of that are apt to fill a man with *joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

The difference between good and bad men is never so remarkable in this world, as when they are upon their death-bed. This the scripture observes to us, Psal. xxxvii.

Psal. xxxvii. 37. *Mark the perfect man, and behold t upright, for the end of that man is peace.*

With what triumph and exultation doth the bless Apostle St. Paul, upon the review of his life, discour concerning his death and dissolution? 2 Tim. iv. 6. 7. *I am now ready* says he, *to be offered up, and the tin of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good figh I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henc forth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, whi the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that da* What would not any of us do to be thus affected whe we come to leave the world, and to be able to bear th thoughts of death and eternity with so quiet and we satisfied a mind! Why, let us but endeavour to liv holy lives, and to be useful and serviceable to God i our generation, as this holy Apostle was, and we sha have the same ground of joy and triumph which he hac For this is the proper and genuine effect of virtue an goodness; *The work of righteousness is peace, and th effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever* All the good actions that we do in this life are so man seeds of comfort sown in our own consciences, whic will spring up one time or other, but especially in th approaches of death, when we come to take a serious review of our lives; for then men's consciences use t deal plainly and impartially with them, and to tell them the truth; and if at that time more especially *our heart condemn us not, then may we have comfort and confidenc towards God.*

V. An holy and virtuous life doth transmit a good name and reputation to posterity. And this Solomon hath determined to be a much greater happiness, than for a man to leave a great estate behind him: *A good name,* says he, *is rather to be chosen than great riches.* Pious and virtuous men do commonly gain to themselves a good esteem and reputation in this world, while they are in it; but the virtues of good men are not al- ways so bright and shining as to meet with that re- spect and acknowledgment which is due to them in this world. Many times they are much clouded by the infirmities and passions which attend them, and are sha- dowed

owed by ſome affected ſingularities and moroſities, hich thoſe which have lived more retired from the orld are more liable to. Beſides that the envy of o-ners, who are not ſo good as they, lies heavy upon hem, and does depreſs them. For bad men are very apt o miſinterpret the beſt actions of the good, and put falſe olours upon them, and when they have nothing elſe to bject againſt them, to charge them with hypocriſy and inſincerity; an objection as hard to be anſwered, as it is o be made good, unleſs we could ſee into the hearts of nen.

But when good men are dead and gone, and the bright and ſhining example of their virtues is at a conve-nient diſtance, and does not gall and upbraid others, hen envy ceaſeth, and every man is then content to give a good man his due praiſe, and his friends and poſterity nay then quietly enjoy the comfort of his reputation, which is ſome ſort of bleſſing to him that is gone. This difference Solomon obſerves to us between good and bad men; *The memory of the juſt is bleſſed, or well ſpoke of; but the name of the wicked ſhall rot.*

VI. And laſtly, Religion and virtue do derive a bleſſing upon our poſterity after us. *Oh! that there were ſuch an heart in them,* ſaith Moſes concerning the people of Iſrael, *that they would fear me, and keep all my command-ments always, that it might be well with them and with their children for ever!* And to this purpoſe there are ma-ny promiſes in ſcripture of God's *bleſſing the poſterity of the righteous, and his ſhewing mercy to thouſands of the children of them that love him, and keep his commandments.*

And this is a great motive to obedience, and touches upon that natural affection which men bear to their chil-dren; ſo that if we have any regard to them, or con-cernment for their happineſs, we ought to be very care-ful of our duty, and afraid to offend God; becauſe ac-cording as we demean ourſelves towards him, we entail a laſting bleſſing or a great curſe upon our children; by ſo many and ſo ſtrong bonds hath God tied our duty up-on us, that if we either deſire our own happineſs, or the happineſs of thoſe that are deareſt to us, and part of our-ſelves,

selves, we must *fear God, and keep his commandments.*

And thus I have briefly represented to you some of t chief benefits and advantages which an holy and virtu life does commonly bring to men in this world, whic the first encouragement mentioned in the text; *Ye h your fruit unto holiness.*

Before I proceed to the second, I shall only just ta notice, by way of application, of what has been said this argument.

1. That it is a great encouragement to well-doin to consider that ordinarily piety and goodness are hinderance to a man's temporal felicity, but very fr quently great promoters of it; so that, excepting on the case of persecution for religion, I think I may safe challenge any man to shew me how the practice of a part or duty of religion, how the exercise of any gra or virtue is to the prejudice of a man's temporal intere or does debar him of any true pleasure, or hinder him any real advantage, which a prudent and considera man would think fit to chuse. And as for persecuti and sufferings for religion, God can reward us for the if he please, in this world; and we have all the assuran that we can desire, that he will do it abundantly in t next.

2. The hope of long life, and especially of a qui and comfortable death, should be a great encourag ment to an holy and virtuous life. He that lives wel takes the best course to live long, and lays in for a happy old age, free from the diseases and infirmiti which are naturally procured by a vitious youth, an likewise free from the guilt and galling remembrance a wicked life. And there is no condition which we ca fall into in this world, that does so clearly discover th difference between a good and bad man, as a death-bed for then the good man begins most sensibly to enjoy th comforts of well-doing, and the sinner to taste th bitter fruits of sin. What a wide difference is then t be seen between the hopes and fears of these two sort of persons! and surely next to the actual possession o blessedness, the good hopes and comfortable prospect o it are the greatest happiness; and next to the actua

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ense of pain, the fear of suffering is the greatest torment.

Though there were nothing beyond this life to be expected, yet if men were sure to be possessed with these delightful or troublesome passions when they come to die, no man that wisely considers things would, for all the pleasures of sin, forfeit the comfort of a righteous soul leaving this world full of the hope of immortality; and endure the vexation and anguish of a guilty conscience, and that infinite terror and amazement which so frequently possesseth the soul of a dying sinner.

3. If there be any spark of a generous mind in us, it should animate us to do well, that we may be well spoken of when we are gone off the stage, and may transmit a grateful memory of our lives to those that shall be after us. I proceed now to the

Second thing I proposed, as the great advantage indeed, *viz.* the glorious reward of a holy and virtuous life in another world, which is here called *everlasting life; and the end everlasting life;* by which the Apostle intends to express to us, both the happiness of our future state, and the way and means whereby we are prepared and made meet to be made partakers of it; and that is by the constant and sincere endeavours of an holy and good life. For it is they only that *have their fruit unto holiness, whose end shall be everlasting life.* I shall speak briefly to these two, and so conclude my discourse upon this text.

I. The happiness of our future state, which is here expressed by the name of *everlasting life,* in very few words, but such as are of wonderful weight and significancy: for they import the excellency of this state, and the eternity of it. And who is sufficient to speak to either of these arguments? Both of them are too big to enter now into the heart of man, too vast and boundless to be comprehended by human understanding, and too unwieldy to be managed by the tongue of men and angels, answerable to the unspeakable greatness and glory of them. And if I were able to declare them unto you, as they deserved, you would not be able to hear me. And therefore I shall chuse to say but little upon

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an argument of which I can never ſay enough, and ſh very briefly conſider theſe two things which are comp hended in that ſhort deſcription which the text gives u future happineſs, by the name of *everlaſting life, viz.* excellency of this ſtate, and the eternity of it.

1. The excellency of it, which is here repreſen to us under the notion of life, the moſt deſirable of other things, becauſe it is the foundation of all other joyments whatſoever. Barely to be in being, and to ſenſible that we are ſo, is but a dry notion of life. T true notion of life is to be well and to be happy; *vere eſt bene valere.* They who are in the moſt mi rable condition that can be imagined, are in being, a ſenſible alſo that they are miſerable. But this kind life is ſo far from coming under the true notion of li that the ſcripture calls it *the ſecond death,* Rev. xxi. It is there ſaid, that *the wicked ſhall have their part the lake that burneth with fire and brimſtone, which is ſecond death.* And chap. xx. ver. 6. *Bleſſed and holy he that hath part in the firſt reſurrection; on ſuch the ſecond death ſhall have no power.* So that a ſtate of mi miſery and torment is not life but death; nay, the ſc pture will not allow the life of a wicked man in t world to be true life, but ſpeaks of him as dead. E ii. 1. ſpeaking of the ſinners among the Gentiles, *Yo* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *hath he quickened, who were dead treſpaſſes and ſins.* And which is more yet, the ſcriptu calls a life of ſinful pleaſures, which men eſteem t only happineſs of this world, the ſcripture, I ſay, cal this a death, 1 Tim v. 6. *She that liveth in pleaſur is dead whilſt ſhe liveth.* A lewd and unprofitable lif which ſerves to no good end and purpoſe, is a dea rather than a life. Nay, that decaying and dying lif which we now live in this world, and which is allaye by the mixture of ſo many infirmities and pains, ſo much trouble and ſorrow, I ſay, that even this ſo of life, for all that we are ſo fondly in love with it, do hardly deſerve the name of life. But the life of t world to come, of which we now ſpeak, this is life in deed; to do thoſe things which we were made for, t ſerve the true ends of our being, and to enjoy th com

comfort and reward of so doing, this is the true notion of life; and whatever is less than this, is death, or a degree of it, and approach towards it. And therefore very well may heaven and happiness be described by the notion of life, because truly to live, and to be happy, are words that signify the same thing.

But what kind of life this is, I can no more describe to you in the particularities of it, than Columbus could have described the particular manners and customs of the people of America, before he or any other person in these parts of the world had seen it or been there. But this I can say of it in general, and that from the infallible testimony of the great Creator, and glorious inhabitants of that blessed place, that it is a state of pure pleasure and unmingled joys, of pleasures more manly, more spiritual, and more refined, than any of the delights of sense, consisting in the enlargement of our minds and knowledge to a greater degree, and in the perfect exercise of love and friendship, in the conversation of the best and wisest company, free from self-interest, and all those unsociable passions of envy and jealousy, of malice and ill-will, which spoil the comfort of all conversation in this world; and in a word, free from all other passion or design, but an ardent and almost equal desire to contribute all, that by all means possible they can, to the mutual happiness of one another: For charity reigns in heaven, and is the brightest grace and virtue in the firmament of glory, far out-shining all other; as St. Paul, who had himself been taken up into the third heaven, does expressly declare to us.

Farther yet, this blessed state consists more particularly in these two things: In having our bodies raised and refined to a far greater purity and perfection than ever they had in this world; and in the consequent happiness of the whole man, soul and body, so strictly and firmly united, as never to be parted again, and so equally matched as to be no trouble or impediment to one another.

1*st*, In having our bodies raised and refined to a far greater purity and perfection than ever they had in this world. Our bodies, as they are now, are unequally

tempered, and in a perpetual flux and change, continu ally tending to corruption, because made up of such con trary principles and qualities, as by their perpetual con flict are always at work, conspiring the ruin and dissolu tion of them: But when they are raised again, they shal be so tempered and so refined, as to be free from all tho destructive qualities which do now threaten their chang and dissolution: And though they shall still consist o matter, yet they shall be purified to that degree, as t partake of the immortality of our souls, to which the shall be united, and to be of equal duration with them So the scripture tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 52, 53. *That ou dead bodies shall be raised incorruptible: For this corrupti ble must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put o immortality.*

Our bodies, when they are laid down in the grave are vile carcases, but they shall be raised again beautifu and glorious, and as different from what they were be fore, as the heavenly mansions, in which they are to re side for ever, are from that dark cell of the grave out o which they are raised; and shall then be endowed wit such a life, and strength, and vigour, as to be able without any change or decay, to abide and continue fo ever in the same state.

Our bodies in this world are gross flesh and blood, li able to be affected with natural and sensual pleasures, an to be afflicted with natural pains and diseases, to be pres sed with the natural necessities of hunger and thirst, an obnoxious to all those changes and accidents to which al natural things are subject: But *they shall be raised spiri tual bodies*, pure and refined from all the dregs of mat ter; they shall not hunger, nor thirst, nor be diseased or in pain any more.

These houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, ar continually decaying; and therefore stand in need o continual reparation by food and physic: But *our hous which is from heaven*, as the Apostle calls it, shall be o such lasting and durable materials, as not only time, bu even eternity itself, shall make no impression upon it or cause the least decay in it. *They*, (says our blessed Sa viour,) *who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that worl and the resurrection from the dead, cannot die any more*

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but shall be like the angels, and are the children of God, (*i. e.*) shall in some degree partake of the felicity and immortality of God himself, *who is always the same, and whose years fail not.* Nay, the Apostle expressly tells us, that our bodies after the resurrection shall be spiritual bodies, so that we shall then be as it were all spirit, and our bodies shall be so raised and refined, that they shall be no clog or impediment to the operation of our souls. And it must needs be a great comfort to us whilst we are in the world, to live in the hopes of so happy and glorious a change; when we consider how our bodies do now oppress our spirits, and what a melancholy and dead weight they are upon them, how grievous an incumbrance, and trouble, and temptation they are for the most part to us in this mortal state.

2*dly*, The blessedness of this state consists likewise in the consequent happiness of the whole man, soul and body, so strictly and firmly united, as never to be parted again, and so equally matched, as to be no trouble and impediment to one another.

In this world the soul and body are for the most part very unequally yoked, so that the soul is not only darkened by the gross fumes and clouds which rise from the body, but loaded and oppressed by the dull weight of it, which it very heavily lugs on and draws after it; and the soul likewise, and the vitious inclinations and the irregular passions of it, have many times an ill influence upon the body and the humours of it. But in the next world they shall both be purified; the one from sin, and the other from frailty and corruption, and both be admitted to the blessed sight and enjoyment of the ever blessed God.

But the consideration of this, as I said before, is too big for our narrow apprehensions in this mortal state, and an argument not fit to be treated of by such children as the wisest of men are in this world; and whenever we attempt to speak of it, we do but lisp like children and understand like children, and reason like children about it. *That which is imperfect must be done away,* and our souls must be raised to a greater perfection, and our understandings filled with a stronger and steadier light, before we can be fit to engage in so profound a contemplation.

tion. We must first have been in heaven, and possess of that felicity and glory which is there to be enjoye before we can either speak or think of it in any measu as it deserves. In the mean time, whenever we set bout it, we shall find our faculties oppressed and dazzl with the weight and splendor of so great and glorious argument; like St. Paul, who, when *he was caught into paradise*, saw and heard those things which, when came down again into this world, he was not able to e press, and which it was not possible for the tongue man to utter.

So that, in discoursing of the state of the blessed, w must content ourselves with what the scripture hath r vealed in general concerning it; that it is a state of pe fect freedom from all those infirmities and imperfection those evils and miseries, those sins and temptations whic we are liable to in this world. So St. John describes th glory and felicity of that state, as they were in vision represented to him, Rev xxi. 2, 3, 4. *And I, John, sa the holy city, the new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride a dorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out heaven, saying, behold! the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them, and be their God And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away*; that is, all those evils which we saw or suffered in this world shall for ever vanish and disappear, and, which is the great privilege and felicity of all, that there shall no sin be there, ver. 27. *There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth*, and consequently there shall be no misery and curse there. So we read, chap. xxii. 3, 4. *And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face.* In which last words our employment and our happiness are expressed; but what in particular our employment shall be, and wherein it shall consist, is impossible now to describe; it is sufficient to know in the general, that our employment shall be our unspeakable pleasure, and every way suitable to the glory and happiness of that

that ſtate, and as much above the nobleſt and moſt delightful employments of this world, as the perfection of our bodies, and the power of our ſouls, ſhall then be above what they are now in this world.

For there is no doubt, but that he who made us, and endowed our ſouls with a deſire of immortality, and ſo large a capacity of happineſs, does underſtand very well by what way and means to make us happy, and hath in readineſs proper exerciſes and employments for that ſtate, and every way more fitted to make us happy, than any condition or employment in this world is ſuitable to a temporal happineſs; employments that are ſuitable to *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, united to bodies purified and refined almoſt to the condition of ſpirits, employments which we ſhall be ſo far from being weary of, that they ſhall miniſter to us a new and freſh delight to all eternity; and this perhaps, not ſo much from the variety, as from the perpetual and growing pleaſure of them.

It is ſufficient for us to know this in the general, and to truſt the infinite power, and wiſdom, and goodneſs of God, for the particular manner and circumſtances of our happineſs: Not doubting but that he, who is the eternal and inexhauſtible ſpring and fountain of all happineſs, can and will derive and convey ſuch a ſhare of it to every one of us as he thinks fit, and in ſuch ways as he, who beſt underſtands it, is beſt able to find out.

In a word, the happineſs of the next life ſhall be ſuch, as is worthy of the great King of the world to beſtow upon his faithful ſervants, and ſuch as is infinitely beyond the juſt reward of their beſt ſervices; it is to ſee God, (*i. e.*) to contemplate and love the beſt and moſt perfect of beings, and *to be for ever with the Lord, in whoſe preſence is fulneſs of joy, and at whoſe right hand there are pleaſures for evermore.*

I will ſay no more upon this argument, leſt I ſhould ſay leſs, and becauſe whoever ventures to wade far into it will ſoon find himſelf out of his depth, and in danger to be ſwallowed up and loſt in that great abyſs, which is not to be fathomed by the ſhallow faculties of mortal men.

I ſhall therefore only mention the

2. Thing I proposed to speak to, *viz.* The eternity this happiness; *and the end everlasting life:* by which t Apostle intends to express the outmost perfection, b not the final period of the happiness of good men in a other world. For to a perfect state of happiness the two conditions are requisite, that it be immutable, a that it be interminable, that it can neither admit of change nor of an end. And this is all that I shall say it, it being impossible to say any thing that is more i telligible and plain, concerning that which is infinit than that it is so. I should now have proceeded to the

II. Thing I proposed, *viz.* By what way and mea we may be prepared, and made meet to be made pa takers of this happiness; and that is, as I have told y all along, by the constant and sincere endeavour of holy and good life; for the text supposeth that they on who are *made free from sin, and become the servants God,* and who *have their fruit unto holiness,* are th whose end shall be *everlasting life.* But this is an arg ment which I have had so frequent occasion to speak t that I shall not now meddle with. All that I shall more at present shall be to make an inference or tw from what hath been said upon this argument.

1. The consideration of the happy state of good m in another world cannot but be a great comfort and su port to good men under all the evils and sufferings of th present life. Hope is a great cordial to the minds of me especially when the thing hoped for does so vastly ou weigh the present grievance and trouble. The holy scri tures, which reveal to us the happiness of our futu state, do likewise assure us that there is no compariso between the afflictions and sufferings of good men in th world, and the reward of them in the other. *I recko* saith St. Paul, Rom. viii. 8. *that the sufferings of th present time are not worthy to be compared with the glo that shall be revealed in us.*

Particularly, the consideration of that glorious chang which shall be made in our bodies at the resurrectio ought to be a great comfort to us under all the pai and diseases which they are now liable to, and even gainst death itself. One of the greatest burdens of hu man nature is the frailty and infirmity of our bodie

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the neceſſities which they are frequently preſſed withal, the diſeaſes and pains to which they are liable, and *the fear of death*, by reaſon whereof a great part of mankind are *ſubject to bondage*; againſt all which this is an everlaſting ſpring of conſolation to us, that the time is coming when we ſhall have other ſorts of bodies, freed from that burden of corruption which we now groan under, and from all thoſe miſeries and inconveniencies which fleſh and blood are now ſubject to. For the time will come, when *thoſe vile bodies*, which we now wear, *ſhall be changed, and faſhioned like to the glorious body of the Son of God*; and when they ſhall be raiſed at the laſt day, they ſhall not be raiſed ſuch as we laid them down, vile and corruptible, but immortal and incorruptible: for the ſame power which hath raiſed them up to life, ſhall likewiſe change them, and put a glory upon them like to that of the glorified body of our Lord; and when this glorious change is made, *when this corruptible hath put on incorruption, and this mortal hath put on immortality, then ſhall come to paſs the ſaying that is written, death is ſwallowed up in victory*; and when this *laſt enemy* is perfectly ſubdued, we ſhall be ſet above all the frailties and dangers, all the temptations and ſufferings of this mortal ſtate; there will be then no *fleſhly luſts* and brutiſh paſſions *to war againſt the ſoul; no law in our members* to riſe up in rebellion againſt *the law of our minds*; no diſeaſes to torment us, no danger of death to terrify us; all the motions and paſſions of our outward man ſhall then be perfectly ſubject to the reaſon of our minds, and our bodies ſhall partake of the immortality of our ſouls. How ſhould this conſideration bear us up under all the evils of life and the fears of death, that the reſurrection will be a perfect cure of all our infirmities and diſeaſes, and an effectual remedy of all the evils that we now labour under; and that it is but a very little while that we ſhall be troubled with theſe frail, and mortal, and vile bodies, which ſhall ſhortly be laid in the duſt, and when they are raiſed again, ſhall become ſpiritual, incorruptible, and glorious!

And if our bodies ſhall undergo ſo happy a change, what happineſs may we imagine ſhall then be conferred upon our ſouls, that ſo much better and nobler part of our-

ourselves! As the Apostle reasons in another case, *D God take care of oxen?* Hath he this consideration of o bodies, which are but the brutish part of the man? Wh regard will he then have to his own image, that spark divinity which is for ever to reside in these bodies? upon the account of our souls, and for their sakes, o bodies shall become *incorruptible, spiritual and glorious* then certainly our souls shall be endowed with far mo excellent and divine qualities: if our bodies shall in som degree partake of the perfection of our souls in their sp ritual and immortal nature, to what a pitch of perfectio shall our souls be raised and advanced! even to an equa lity with angels, and to some kind of participation of th divine nature and perfection, so far as a creature is ca pable of them.

2. The comparison which is here in the text, and which I have largely explained, between the manifes inconveniencies of a sinful and vitious course, and th manifold advantages of an holy and virtuous life, is a plain direction to us which of these two to chuse. So that I may make the same appeal that Moses does, after that he had at large declared the blessings promised to the o-bedience of God's laws, and the course denounced against the violation and transgression of them, Deut. xxx. 19. *I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore chuse life,* that you may be happy in life and death, and after death to all eternity. I know every one is ready to chuse happiness, and to say with Balaam, *let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his:* but if we do in good earnest desire the end, we must take the way that leads to it; we must *become the servants of God, and have our fruit unto holiness,* if ever we expect that *the end shall be everlasting life.*

SER-

SERMON CLXVII.

The nature and neceſſity of holy reſolution.

JOB xxxiv. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I have born chaſtiſement, I will not offend any more: that which I ſee not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

THeſe words are the words of Elihu, one of Job's friends, and the only one who is not reproved for his diſcourſe with Job, and who was probably the author of this ancient and moſt eloquent hiſtory of *the ſuffering and patience of Job, and of the end which the Lord made with him;* and they contain in them a deſcription of the temper and behaviour of a true penitent. *Surely it is meet,* &c.

In which words we have the two eſſential parts of a true repentance.

Firſt, An humble acknowledgment and confeſſion of our ſins to God, *Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I have born chaſtiſement.*

Secondly, A firm purpoſe and reſolution of amendment and forſaking of ſin for the future, *I will not offend any more; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

Firſt, An humble acknowledgment and confeſſion of our ſins to God; *Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I have born chaſtiſement,* that is, have ſinned and been juſtly puniſhed for it, and am now convinced of the evil of ſin, and reſolved to leave it; *I have born chaſtiſement, I will offend no more.*

Of this firſt part of repentance, *viz.* an humble confeſſion of our ſins to God, with great ſhame and ſorrow for them, and a through conviction of the evil and danger of a ſinful courſe, I have already treated at large.

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In theſe repentance muſt begin, but it muſt not end them: for a penitent confeſſion of our ſins to God, ar a conviction of the evil of them, ſignifies nothing, u leſs it brings us to a reſolution of amendment, that is, leaving our ſins. and betaking ourſelves to a better cour And this I intend, by God's aſſiſtance, to ſpeak to no as being the

Second part of a true repentance here deſcribed in th text, *viz.* A firm purpoſe and reſolution of amendmen and forſaking of ſin for the future; and to expreſs it t more ſtrongly and emphatically, and to ſhew the firm neſs of the reſolution, it is repeated again, *I will not o fend any more;* and then in the next verſe, *if I have do iniquity, I will do no more.* And this is ſo neceſſary part of repentance, that herein the very eſſence and fo mal nature of repentance does conſiſt, *viz.* in the firm an ſincere purpoſe and reſolution of a better courſe.

In the handling of this argument, I ſhall do theſe fi things.

1. I ſhall ſhew what reſolution is in general.

2. What is the ſpecial object of this kind of reſoluti on.

3. What is implied in a ſincere reſolution of leavin our ſins, and returning to God.

4. I ſhall ſhew that in this reſolution of amendmen the very eſſence and formal nature of repentance doe conſiſt.

5. I ſhall offer ſome conſiderations to convince me both of the neceſſity and fitneſs of this reſolution, an of keeping ſtedfaſtly to it. *Surely it is meet to be ſai unto God, I will not offend any more.*

6. I ſhall add ſome brief directions concerning the ma naging and maintaining of this holy and neceſſary reſoluti on.

I. What reſolution in general is. It is a fixed deter mination of the will about any thing, either to do it, o not to do it, as upon due deliberation we have judge and concluded it to be neceſſary or convenient to be done or not to be done by us: And this ſuppoſeth three things

1. Reſolution ſuppoſeth a precedent deliberation o the mind about the thing to be reſolved upon. For n

prudent man does determine or resolve upon any thing till he hath considered the thing, and weighed it well with himself, and hath fully debated the necessity and expedience of it; what advantage he shall have by the doing of it, and what danger and inconvenience will certainly or very probably redound to him by the neglect and omission of it. For peremptorily to determine and resolve upon any thing before a man hath done this, is not properly resolution, but precipitancy and rashness.

2. Resolution supposeth some judgment passed upon the thing, after a man hath thus deliberated about it; that he is satisfied in his mind one way or other concerning it, that his understanding is convinced either that it is necessary and convenient for him to do it, or that it is not; and this is sometimes called resolution, but it is not that resolution which immediately determines a man to action. This judgment of the necessity and fitness of the thing is not the resolution of the will, but of the understanding: for it does not signify that a man hath fully determined to do the thing, but that he hath determined with himself that it is reasonable to be done, and that he is no longer in doubt and suspence whether it be best for him to do it or not, but is in his mind resolved and satisfied one way or other. And these are two very different things; to be resolved in one's judgment, that is, to be convinced that a thing is fit and necessary to be done, and to be resolved to set upon the doing of it; for many men are thus convinced of the fitness and necessity of the thing, who yet have not the heart, cannot bring themselves to a firm and fixed resolution to set upon the doing of it. So that an act of the judgment must go before the resolution of the will: for as he is rash that resolves to do a thing before he hath deliberated about it; so he is blind and wilful that resolves to do a thing before his judgment be satisfied, whether it be best for him to do it or not.

3. If the matter be of considerable moment and consequence, resolution supposeth some motion of the affections; which is a kind of bias upon the will, a certain propension and inclination that a man feels in himself, either urging him to do a-thing, or withdrawing him from it. Deliberation and judgment, they direct a man what

what to do, or leave undone; the affections excite a quicken a man to take ſome reſolution in the matte that is, to do ſuitably to the judgment his mind ha paſſed upon the thing. For inſtance; a great ſinner r flects upon his life, and conſiders what he hath don what the courſe is that he lives in, and what the iſſue an conſequence of it will probably or certainly be, whethe it will make him happy or miſerable in the concluſion and debating the matter calmly and ſoberly with him ſelf, he is ſatisfied and convinced of the evil and dange of a wicked life, and conſequently that it is beſt for hi to reſolve upon a better courſe, that is, to repent. Nov theſe thoughts muſt needs awaken in him fearful appre henſions of the wrath of almighty God, which is due t him for his ſins, and hangs over him, and which he is e very moment in danger of, if he goes on in his evil courſe Theſe thoughts are apt likewiſe to fill him with ſham and confuſion, at the remembrance of his horrible ingra titude to God his maker, his beſt friend and greateſt be nefactor, and of his deſperate folly in provoking om nipotent juſtice againſt himſelf; whereupon he is heartily grieved and troubled for what he hath done; and theſe affections of fear, and ſhame, and ſorrow, being once up, they come with great violence upon the will, and urge the man to a ſpeedy reſolution of changing his courſe, and leaving the way he is in, which he is fully convinced is ſo evil and dangerous; and of betaking himſelf to another courſe, which he is fully ſatisfied will be much more for his ſafety and advantage.

So that reſolution, in general, is a fixed determination of the will; that is, ſuch a determination as is not only for the preſent free from all wavering and doubting, but ſuch as cannot prudently be altered, ſo long as reaſon remains. For the man, who upon full deliberation and conviction of his mind reſolves upon any thing, cannot without the imputation of fickleneſs and inconſtancy quit that reſolution, ſo long as he hath the ſame reaſon which he had when he took it up, and is ſtill ſatisfied that the reaſon is good. For inſtance; the man who hath taken up a reſolution to be ſober, becauſe of the uglineſs and unreaſonableneſs of drunkenneſs, and the temporal inconveniencies and eternal damnation which that ſin

expoſeth

exposeth a man to; if these reasons be true and good, can never prudently alter the resolution which he hath taken, and return to that sin again.

II. Let us consider what is the special object or matter of this resolution, wherein the formal nature of repentance does consist, what it is that a man when he repents resolves upon; and that I told you is to leave his sin, and to return to God and his duty; and this is the resolution which the penitent here described in the text takes up, *I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.* He resolves against all known sin, *I will not offend any more;* and if through ignorance he had sinned and done contrary to his duty, he desires to be better instructed, that he may not offend again in the like kind. *That which I see not teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

So that the true penitent resolves upon these two things.

1. To forsake his sin. And

2. To return to God and his duty.

1*st*, To forsake his sin: and this implies the quitting of his sinful course whatever it had been; and that not only by abstaining from the outward act and practice of every sin, but by endeavouring to crucify and subdue the inward affection and inclination to it.

And it implies, farther, the utter forsaking of sin; for repentance is not only a resolution to abstain from sin for the present, but never to return to it again. Thus Ephraim, when he repented of his idolatry, he utterly renounced it, saying, *What have I to do any more with idols?* Hos. xiv. 8. He, that truly repents, is resolved to break off his sinful course, and to abandon those lusts and vices which he was formerly addicted to, and lived in.

2*dly*, The true penitent resolves likewise to return to God and his duty: he does not stay in the negative part of religion, he does not only resolve not to commit any sin, but not to neglect or omit any thing that he knows to be his duty; and if he has been ignorant of any part of his duty, he is willing to know it, that he may do it; he is not only determined to forsake his sin, which will

make him miſerable, but to return to God, wh alone can make him happy: he is now reſolved to lo God, and to ſerve him as much as he hated and diſh nourced him before; and will now be as diligent to pe form and practiſe all the duties and parts of religion, he was negligent of them before, and as ready to do a the good he can to all men in any kind, as he was car leſs of theſe things before: Theſe in general are the thin which a true penitent reſolves upon. I proceed to the

III. Thing I propoſed to conſider, namely, what implied in a ſincere reſolution of leaving our ſins, and r turning to God and our duty. And this holy reſolutio if it be thorough and ſincere, does imply in it theſe thr things.

1. That it be univerſal.

2. That it be a reſolution of the means as well as the end.

3. That it preſently comes to effect, and be ſpeedi and without delay put in execution.

1*ſt*, A ſincere reſolution of amendment muſt be ur verſal; a reſolution to forſake all ſin, and to return our whole duty, and every part of it; ſuch a reſolutic as that of holy David, *to hate every falſe way, and have reſpect to all God's commandments.*

This reſolution muſt be univerſal, in reſpect of th whole man; and with regard to all our actions. In r ſpect of the whole man; for we muſt reſolve not on to abſtain from the outward action of ſin, but this re lution muſt have its effect upon our inward man, a reach our very hearts and thoughts; it muſt reſtra our inclinations, and *mortify our luſts and corrupt aff ctions, and renew us in the very ſpirit of our minds*, as th Apoſtle expreſſes it.

And it muſt be univerſal, in reſpect of all our action For this is not the reſolution of a ſincere penitent, t abſtain only from groſs and notorious, from ſcandalo and open ſins; but likewiſe to refrain from the commi ſion of thoſe ſins which are ſmall in the eſteem of me and not branded with a mark of publick infamy and r proach; to forbear ſin in ſecret, and when no eye man ſees us and takes notice of us. This is not a ſi

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cere resolution, to resolve to practise the duties and virtues of religion in publick, and to neglect them in private; to resolve to perform the duties of the first table, and to pass by those of the second; to resolve to serve God, and to take a liberty to defraud and cozen men; to honour our Father which is in heaven, and to injure and hate our brethren upon earth; *to love our neighbour, and to hate our enemy*, as the Jews did of old time; to resolve against swearing, and to allow ourselves the liberty to speak falsely, and to break our word; to flee from superstition, and to run into faction; to abhor idols, and to commit sacrilege: to resolve to be devout at church, and deceitful in our shops; to be very scrupulous about lesser matters, and to be very zealous about indifferent things; *to tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, and to omit the weightier matters of the law, mercy, and fidelity, and justice*; to be very rigid in matters of faith and opinion, but loose in life and practice.

No; the resolution of a sincere penitent must be universal and uniform; it must extend alike to the forbearing of all sin, and the exercise of every grace and virtue, and to the due practice and performance of every part of our duty. The true penitent must resolve for the future to abstain from all sin, *to be holy in all manner of conversation, and to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which by Jesus Christ are to the praise and glory of God.* For if a man do truly repent of his wicked life, there is the very same reason why he should resolve against all sin, as why he should resolve against any; why he should observe all the commandments of God, as why he should keep any one of them. For as St. James reasons concerning him that wilfully breaks any one commandment of God, that *he is guilty of all, and breaks the whole law*; because the authority of God is equally stamped upon all his laws, and is violated and contemned by the wilful transgression of any one of them; *For he that hath said, thou shalt not kill, hath likewise said, thou shalt not commit adultery, and thou shalt not steal*: so he that resolves against any one sin, or upon performance of any one part of his duty, ought for the very same reason to make his resolution universal; because one sin is evil and provoking to God, as

well as another; and the performance of one part o our duty, good and pleaſant to him, as well as another and there is no difference. So that he that reſolves a gainſt any ſin, upon wiſe and reaſonable grounds, because of the evil of it, and the danger of the wrath o God to which it expoſeth us, ought for the ſame reaſon to reſolve againſt all ſin; becauſe it is damnable to commit adultery, and to ſteal as well as to kill; and that reſolution againſt ſin, which is not univerſal, it is a plain caſe that it is not true and ſincere, and that it was not taken up out of the ſenſe of the intrinſical evil of ſin, and the danger of it in reſpect of God and the judgment of another world, (for this reaſon holds againſt every ſin, and remains always the ſame) but that it was taken up upon ſome inferior conſideration, either becauſe of the ſhame and infamy of it among men, or becauſe of ſome other temporal inconvenience, which if the man could be ſecured againſt, he would preſently break his reſolution, and return to the commiſſion of that ſin, with as much freedom as any other.

2*dly*, A ſincere reſolution implies a reſolution of the means as well as of the end. He, that is truly and honeſtly reſolved againſt any ſin, is likewiſe reſolved to avoid as much as is poſſible the occaſions and temptations which may lead or draw him to that ſin; or if they happen to preſent themſelves to him, he is reſolved to ſtand upon his guard, and to reſiſt them. In like manner, he that ſincerely reſolves upon doing his duty in any kind, muſt reſolve upon the means that are requiſite and neceſſary to the due diſcharge and performance of that duty. As he that reſolves againſt that needleſs and uſeleſs ſin of ſwearing in common converſation, muſt reſolve alſo to *ſet a guard before the door of his lips*, ſeeing it is certain that it requires great care and attention, at leaſt for ſome competent time to get rid of a habit.

When David reſolved *not to offend with his tongue*, he reſolved at the ſame time to be very watchful over himſelf, Pſal. xxxix. 1. *I ſaid I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth as with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* For a man to reſolve againſt any ſin or vice, and yet to involve himſelf

self continually in the occasions, and to run himself into the company and temptations which do naturally, and will almost necessarily lead and betray him into those sins, is a plain evidence of insincerity. This I take for a certain rule, that whatever can reasonably move a man to resolve upon any end, will, if his resolution be sincere and honest, determine him every whit as strongly to use all those means which are necessary in order to that end. But of this I have spoken elsewhere.

3*dly*, A sincere resolution of leaving our sins, and returning to God and our duty, does imply the present time, and that we are to resolve speedily and without delay to put this resolution in practice; that we are peremptorily determined not to go one step farther in the ways of sin, not to neglect any duty that God requires of us, not for one moment; but immediately and forthwith to set upon the practice of it, so soon as occasion and opportunity is offered to us. And the reason of this is evident; because the very same considerations that prevail upon any man to take up this resolution of amendment, and changing the course of his life, are every whit as prevalent to engage him to put this resolution presently in practice and execution.

I deny not, but a man may resolve upon a thing for the future, and when the time comes, may execute his resolution, and this resolution may for all that be very sincere and real, though it was delayed to a certain time, because he did not see reason to resolve to do the thing sooner: But it cannot be so in this case of repentance; because there can no good reason be imagined, why a man should resolve seven years hence to change his course, and break off his sinful life, but the very same reason will hold as strongly, why he should do it presently and without delay; and over and besides this, there are a great many and powerful reasons and considerations why he should rather put this good resolution in present execution, than put it off and defer it to any farther time whatsoever.

What is it that puts thee upon this resolution of leaving thy sins, and urgeth thee to do it at all? Art thou resolved to leave sin because it is so great an evil? Why it is so for the present; the evil of it is intrinsical to it,

and cleaves to the very nature of it, and is never to b
ſeparated from it; ſo that this is a preſent reaſon, an
as ſtrong againſt it now, as ever it will be hereafter
nay, it is ſtronger at preſent; becauſe if it be ſo great a
evil, the ſooner we leave it the better.

Or doſt thou reſolve to forſake ſin, becauſe thou ar
apprehenſive of the danger and miſchief of it, that i
will expoſe thee to the wrath of God, and to the endleſ
and intolerable miſery of another world? why this rea-
ſon likewiſe makes much more for the preſent leaving o
it; becauſe the longer thou continueſt in a ſinful and im-
penitent ſtate, the greater is thy danger, and the greate
penalty thou wilt moſt certainly incur; by delaying to
put this good reſolution in practice, thou doſt increaſe and
multiply the cauſes of thy fear. For hereby thou pro-
vokeſt God more, and every day doſt incenſe his wrath
more and more againſt thee; thou prepareſt more and
more fuel for *everlaſting burnings, and treaſureſt up for
thyſelf more wrath, againſt the day of wrath, and the re-
velation of the righteous judgment of God.* Nay, thou doſt
not only encreaſe and aggravate, but thou doſt hereby
haſten thine own miſery and ruin, and takeſt the moſt
effectual courſe that is poſſible, to bring thine own fears,
and the vengeance of almighty God ſo much the ſooner
upon thee. For nothing provokes God to take a ſpeedi-
er courſe with ſinners, and does more quicken the pace
of his judgments, than wilful continuance in ſin.

And yet farther; if thy reſolution be valuable and con-
ſiderable to thee, thou takeſt the moſt effectual courſe in
the world to fruſtrate and defeat it. Thou art fully re-
ſolved to leave thy ſins hereafter, and thou thinkeſt thou
haſt reaſon for it: but by continuing in them for the pre-
ſent, thou provokeſt the juſtice of almighty God to cut
thee off before thy reſolution has taken effect.

Again; doſt thou reſolve to leave thy ſins one time
or other, becauſe thereby thou hopeſt to put thyſelf in-
to a capacity of pardon and mercy, and of eternal life
and happineſs? why this reaſon ſhould move thee to do
the thing as ſoon as is poſſible; becauſe the ſooner thou
forſakeſt thy ſins, thou haſt the greater hope of finding
mercy and forgiveneſs with God; and the ſooner thou
begin-

beginnest a holy course, and the longer thou continuest therein, thou hast reason to expect a greater and more ample reward. Thou canst not by holding off, hope to bring down pardon and mercy to lower rates, and to obtain these hereafter upon easier terms. No, the terms and conditions of God's mercy are already fixed and established, so as never to be altered.

So that whatever reason thou canst possibly alledge for taking up this resolution, it is every whit as forcible and powerful to persuade thee to put it speedily in execution.

And then there is this reason besides, and that a very considerable one, why thou shouldest immediately put this resolution in practice, and not delay for a moment. Thou mayest at present do it much more certainly, and much more easily. Much more certainly; because thou art surer of the present time, than thou canst be of the future. The present is in thy power, but not one moment more. And thou mayest at present do it more easily; for the longer thou continuest in sin, thy resolution against it will still grow weaker, and the habit of sin continually stronger. Thou wilt every day be more enslaved by the power of thy lusts, and thy heart will every day be more *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* All the change that time makes will still be for the worse, and more to thy disadvantage. Sin will be as pleasant to thee hereafter, and thou more loth to leave it, than at present. Sin was never mortified by age. It will every day have more strength to bind thee and hold thee fast, and thou wilt have every day less to break loose from it. For by every sin thou dost commit, thou addest a new degree to the strength and force of it; and so much strength as thou addest to it, so much thou takest from thyself, and so much thou losest of thine own power and liberty. For a man and his lusts are like nature and disease; so much strength as the disease gains, nature loseth, and the man is hereby doubly weakened; for he does not only lose so much of his own strength, but the enemy gets it.

Nay, thou dost hereby likewise forfeit that auxiliary strength and assistance which the grace of God is ready to afford to men, his restraining and his preventing grace.

For

For as a man goes on in ſin, and advanceth in an ev courſe, the grace of God draws off by degrees, and h holy Spirit doth inſenſibly leave him; and when a ſi ner is come to this, his beſt reſolutions will *vaniſh li the morning cloud, and the early dew which paſſeth away*

So that it cannot be a true and ſincere reſolution leaving our ſins, if it do not take place, and have n its effect preſently. For there is no man that takes u a reſolution, upon weighty and conſiderable reaſons, doing any thing, but if the reaſons upon which he tak it up urge him to do the thing at preſent, he will pr ſently ſet about it; and that man is not reſolved to do thing, whatever he may pretend, who hath moſt reaſo to do it at preſent, and may beſt do it now, and y delays it.

And thus I have opened to you the nature of this hol reſolution of leaving our ſins, and returning to God an our duty; and have ſhewn what is neceſſarily implie in ſuch a reſolution, if it be ſincere and in good earneſt that it be univerſal; and that it be a reſolution of th means, as well as of the end; and that it preſently tak place and be put in execution. And theſe are three th beſt ſigns and marks that I know of, whereby a ma may try and examine the truth and ſincerity of that re ſolution of amendment which we call repentance. If i be againſt all ſin, and have an equal regard to every par of our duty; if when we reſolve upon the end, that is to avoid ſin, and to perform our duty, we are equally re ſolved upon the means that are neceſſary to thoſe ends if the reſolution we have taken up commence preſently and from that day forward be duly executed and put i practice, then is our repentance and reſolution of amend ment ſincere: But if there be a defect in any of theſe our reſolution is not as it ought to be.

SER

SERMON CLXVIII.

The nature and neceſſity of holy reſolution.

Job xxxiv. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I have born chaſtiſement, I will not offend any more: That which I ſee not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

THeſe words are the deſcription of the temper and behaviour of a true penitent, and do contain in them the two eſſential parts of a true repentance.

Firſt, An humble acknowledgment and confeſſion of ſin.

Secondly, A firm purpoſe and reſolution of amendment and forſaking of our ſins for the future.

And this latter is ſo neceſſary a part of repentance, that herein the very eſſence and formal nature of repentance does conſiſt. In handling of this argument, I propoſed to conſider,

1. What reſolution in general is.

2. What is the ſpecial object or matter of this kind of reſolution.

3. What is implied in a ſincere reſolution of leaving our ſins, and returning to God and our duty.

4. To ſhew that in this reſolution of amendment, the very eſſence and formal nature of repentance doth conſiſt.

5. To offer ſome conſiderations to convince men of the neceſſity and fitneſs of this reſolution, and of keeping ſtedfaſt to it.

6. To add ſome directions concerning the managing

and maintaining this holy reſolution. The three firſt I have ſpoken to, I now proceed to the

IV. To ſhew that in this reſolution, the very eſſence and formal nature of repentance doth conſiſt. A man may do many reaſonable actions, without an explicit reſolution. In things that are more eaſy and natural to us, judgment and reſolution are all one; it is all one to judge a thing fit to be done, and to reſolve to do it. But in matters of difficulty, when a man is to ſtrive againſt the ſtream, and to oppoſe ſtrong habits that have taken deep root, there is nothing to be done without an explicit reſolution. No man makes any remarkable change in his life, ſo as to croſs his inclinations and cuſtom, without an expreſs reſolution. For though a man's judgment be never ſo much convinced of the reaſonableneſs and neceſſity of ſuch a change; yet, unleſs a man's ſpirits be fortified and fixed by reſolution, the power of cuſtom, and the violence of his own inclinations will carry him againſt his judgment. Now there is no change of a man's life can be imagined, wherein a man offers greater violence to inveterate habits, and to the ſtrong propenſions of his preſent temper, than in this of repentance. So that among all the actions of a man's life, there is none that doth more neceſſarily require an expreſs purpoſe, than repentance does.

And that herein repentance doth chiefly conſiſt, I ſhall endeavour to make evident from ſcripture, and from the common apprehenſions of mankind concerning repentance.

The ſcripture, beſides the ſeveral deſcriptions of repentance, uſeth two words to expreſs it to us, μεταμέλεια and μετάνοια. The former properly ſignifies the inward trouble and diſpleaſure which men conceive againſt themſelves for having done amiſs; which if it be κατα Θεον λύπη, *a godly ſorrow*, it worketh in us μετάνοιαν ἀμεταμέλητον, as St. Paul calls it, *a repentance not to be repented of*, that is, ſuch a change of our minds, which as we ſhall have no cauſe to be troubled at, ſo no reaſon to alter afterwards. And what is this but a firm, ſtedfaſt, and unalterable reſolution?

The ſcripture likewiſe uſeth ſeveral phraſes of the like importance to deſcribe repentance by; as *forſaking and turning*

turning from sin, and conversion and turning to God. Forsaking and turning from sin. Hence it is called *repentance from dead works*, Heb. vi. 1. and *turning to God*, Acts xxvi. 20. *I have shewed to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God*, that is, from the worship of idols to the true God. And we have both these together in the description which the Prophet gives of repentance, Isa. lv. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.* Now this change begins in the sinner's resolution of doing this; and the *unrighteous man's forsaking his thoughts*, is nothing else but changing the purpose of his mind, and resolving upon a better course. And thus Lactantius describes it: *Agere autem pœnitentiam nihil aliud est, quam affirmare & profiteri se non amplius peccaturum.* "To "repent is nothing else but for a man to declare and pro- "fess that he will sin no more." This is repentance before men. And repentance before God is a resolution answerable to this profession. And elsewhere saith the same author, "The Greeks do most fully express repen- "tance by the word μετάνοια, because he that repents re- "covers his mind from his former folly, and is troubled "at it; & *confirmat animam suam ad rectius vivendum*, "and confirms his mind for a better course." And how is this done but by resolution?

And that this is the natural and true notion of repentance appears, in that the Heathens did consent and agree in it. Gellius gives this description of it. *Pœnitere tum dicere solemus, cum quæ ipsi fecimus, ea nobis post incipiunt displicere, sententiamque in iis nostram demutamus.* "We are said then to repent, when those things which "we have done begin afterwards to displease us, and we "change our resolution about them." And so likewise one of the philosophers describes it; "repentance is the "beginning of philosophy, a flying from foolish words "and actions, ἀπὸ τῆς ἀμελαμελήτου ζωῆς ἡ πρώτη παρασκευή, "and the first preparation of a life not to be repented of.

It is true indeed, repentance supposeth the entire change of our lives and actions, and a continued state, as the proper consequence of it: But repentance is but the beginning of this change, which takes its rise from the purpose and resolution of our minds, and if it be sincere

and

and firm, it will certainly have this effect, to change ou lives; and if it be not ſo, it is not repentance. For thoug in the nature of the thing it be poſſible, that a man ma ſincerely reſolve upon a thing, and yet let fall his reſoluti on afterwards, before it come into act; yet in the phra of ſcripture, nothing is called repentance but ſuch a re ſolution as takes effect, ſo ſoon as there is opportunit for it. If we change our reſolution, and repent of ou repentance, this is not that which St. Paul calls *repen tance unto ſalvation*. So that no man, that reads an conſiders the bible, can impoſe upon himſelf ſo groſly, a to conceit himſelf a true penitent, and conſequently to be in a ſtate of ſalvation, who hath been troubled for his ſins, and hath taken up a reſolution to leave them if he do not purſue this reſolution, and act according to it.

V. I ſhall in the next place propound ſome arguments and conſiderations to perſuade men to this holy reſolution, and then to keep them firm and ſtedfaſt to it, ſo as never to change it after they have once taken it up.

Firſt, I ſhall propound ſome arguments to perſuade men to take up this reſolution; and they are theſe.

1. Conſider that this reſolution of repentance is nothing but what, under the influence of God's grace and holy Spirit, which are never wanting to the ſincere endeavours of men, is in your power. And it is neceſſary to premiſe this; for unleſs this be cleared, all the other arguments that I can uſe will ſignify nothing. For nothing in the world could be more vain, than to take a great deal of pains to perſuade men to do a thing which they cannot do, to entreat them to attempt an impoſſibility, and to urge and ſolicit them with all earneſtneſs and importunity to do that which is abſolutely and altogether out of their power. All the commands of God, and the exhortations of his word, and all the promiſes and threatenings whereby theſe commands and exhortations are enforced, do plainly ſuppoſe, either that it is in our power to do the thing which God commands or exhorts us to; or elſe, if it be not (which I grant it is not) that God is ready by his grace and ſtrength, if we be not wanting to ourſelves, to aſſiſt and enable us to

thoſe

those ends and purposes. For the gospel supposeth a power going along with it, and that the holy Spirit of God works upon the minds of men, to quicken, and excite, and assist them to their duty. And if it were not so, the exhortations of preachers would be nothing else but a cruel and bitter mocking of sinners, and an ironical insulting over the misery and weakness of poor creatures; and for ministers to preach, or people to hear sermons, upon other terms, would be the vainest expence of time, and the idlest thing we do all the week; and all our dissuasives from sin, and exhortations to holiness and a good life, and vehement persuasions of men to strive to get to heaven, and to escape hell, would be just as if one should urge a blind man, by many reasons and arguments taken from the advantages of sight, and the comfort of that sense, and the beauty of external objects, by all means to open his eyes, and to behold the delights of nature, to see his way, and to look to his steps, and should upbraid him, and be very angry with him for not doing so. Why, if resolution be absolutely impossible to us, and a thing wholly out of our power, it is just the same case. But then we ought to deal plainly and openly with men, and to tell them, that what we so earnestly persuade them to, is that which we certainly know they cannot do. So that it is necessary, if I intend that the following considerations should do any good, to assure men, that it is not impossible for them to make a resolution of leaving their sins, and returning to God.

It is a power which every man is naturally invested withal, to consider, and judge, and chuse. To consider, that is, to weigh and compare things together; to judge, that is, to determine which is best; and to chuse, that is, to resolve to do it or not: and there is nothing more evident, and more universally acknowledged, in temporal cases, and in the affairs and concernments of this life. In these matters resolution is a thing ordinary, and of frequent practice; it is the principle of all great and considerable actions. Men resolve to be great in this world, and by virtue of this resolution, when they have once taken it up, what industry will they not use! what hazards will they not run in the pursuit of their ambitious

deſigns! difficulties and dangers do rather whet their courage, and ſet an edge upon their ſpirits. Men reſolve to be rich; the Apoſtle ſpeaks of ſome that will be rich, 1 Tim. vi. *they that will be rich:* and though this be but a low and mean deſign, yet theſe perſons, by virtue of this reſolution, will toil and take prodigious pains in it.

And as to ſpiritual things, every man hath the ſame power radically, that is, he hath the faculties of underſtanding and will, but theſe are obſtructed and hindered in their exerciſe, and ſtrongly biaſſed a contrary way by the power of evil inclinations and habits; ſo that as to the exerciſe of this power, and the effect of it in ſpiritual things, men are in a ſort as much diſabled as if they were deſtitute of it. For it is in effect all one, to have no underſtanding at all to conſider things that are ſpiritual, as to have the underſtanding blinded by an invincible prejudice; to have no liberty as to ſpiritual things, as to have the will ſtrongly biaſſed againſt them. For a man that hath this prejudice upon his underſtanding, and this bias upon his will, is, to all intents and purpoſes, as if he were deſtitute of theſe faculties. But then we are not to underſtand this impotency to be abſolutely natural, but accidental, not to be in the firſt frame and conſtitution of our ſouls, but to have happened upon the depravation of nature. It is not a want of natural faculties, but the binding of them up, and hindering their operations to certain purpoſes. This impotency proceeds from the power of evil habits. And thus the ſcripture expreſſeth it, and compares an impotency ariſing from bad habits and cuſtoms to a natural impoſſibility; nothing coming nearer to nature, than powerful cuſtom. *Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, and the leopard his ſpots? Then may ye alſo, that are accuſtomed to do evil, learn to do well.*

But now God, by the goſpel, hath deſigned the recovery of mankind from the ſlavery of ſin, and the power of their luſts; and therefore, as by the death of Chriſt, he hath provided a way to remove the guilt of ſin, ſo by the Spirit of Chriſt, he furniſheth us with ſufficient power to deſtroy the dominion of ſin. I ſay ſufficient, if we be not wanting to ourſelves, but be *workers together with God*

God, and be as diligent *to work out our own salvation*, as he is ready *to work in us both to will and to do*.

So that when we persuade men to repent and change their lives, and to resolve upon a better course, we do not exhort them to any thing that is absolutely out of their power, but to what they may do; though not of themselves, yet by the grace of God, which is always ready to assist them, unless by their former gross neglects, and long obstinacy in an evil course, they have provoked God to withdraw his grace from them. So that though, considering our own strength abstractedly, and separately from the grace of God, these things be not in our power; yet the grace of God puts them into our power.

And this is so far from derogating from the grace of God, that it is highly to the praise of it. For if the grace of God makes us able to repent and resolve upon a new life, he that asserts this does not attribute his repentance to himself, but to the grace of God: nay, he that says that God's grace excites, and is ready to assist men to do what God commands, represents God immensely more good and gracious, than he that says that God commands men to do that which by their natural power they cannot do, and will condemn them for not doing it, and yet denies them that grace which is necessary to the doing of it.

Let this then be established as a necessary consideration to prevent discouragement, that to resolve upon the change of our lives, is that which by the grace of God we are enabled to do, if we will. Resolution is no strange and extraordinary thing; it is one of the most common acts that belongs to us as we are men; but we do not ordinarily apply it to the best purposes. It is not so ordinary for men to resolve to be good, as to be rich and great; not so common for men to resolve against sin, as to resolve against poverty and suffering. It is not so usual for men to resolve to keep a good conscience, as to keep a good place. Indeed our corrupt nature is much more opposite to this holy kind of resolution. But then to balance and answer this, God hath promised greater and more immediate assistance to us in

this caſe than in any other. There is a general bleſſing and common aſſiſtance promiſed to reſolution and diligence about temporal things; and God's providence doth often advance ſuch perſons to riches and honour. *The diligent hand, with God's bleſſing, makes rich*, as Solomon tells us, Prov. 4. and xxii. 29. *Seeſt thou*, ſays he, *a man diligent in his buſineſs? He ſhall ſtand before kings, he ſhall not ſtand before mean men.* Now, diligence is the effect of a great and vigorous reſolution. But there is a ſpecial and extraordinary bleſſing and aſſiſtance that attends the reſolution and endeavour of a holy life. God hath not promiſed to ſtrengthen men with all might in the way to riches and honours, and to aſſiſt the ambitious and covetous deſigners of this world with *a mighty and glorious power, ſuch as raiſed up Jeſus from the dead:* but this he hath promiſed to thoſe, who with a firm purpoſe and reſolution do engage in the ways of religion. Let us then ſhake off our ſloth and liſtleſſneſs, and in that ſtrength and aſſiſtance which God offers, let us reſolve to leave our ſins, and to amend our lives.

2. Conſider what it is that you are to reſolve upon; to leave your ſins, and to return to God and goodneſs. So that the things I am perſuading you to reſolve upon, are the ſtrongeſt reaſons that can be for ſuch a reſolution. Sin is ſuch a thing, that there can be no better argument to make men reſolve againſt it, than to conſider what it is, and to think ſeriouſly of the nature and conſequence of it. And God and goodneſs are ſo amiable and deſirable, that the very propoſal of theſe objects have invitations and allurements enough to inflame our deſires after them, and to make us ruſh into the embraces of them. If we would but enter into the ſerious conſideration of them, we ſhould ſoon be reſolved in our minds about them.

Do but conſider a little what ſin is. It is the ſhame and blemiſh of thy nature, the reproach and diſgrace of thy underſtanding and reaſon, the great deformity and diſeaſe of thy ſoul, and the eternal enemy of thy reſt and peace. It is thy ſhackles and thy fetters, the tyrant that oppreſſes thee, and reſtrains thee of thy liberty, and condemns thee to the baſeſt ſlavery and the vileſt drudgery. It is the unnatural and violent ſtate of thy ſoul, the worm that perpetually gnaws thy conſcience,

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the cause of all thy fears and troubles, and of all the evils and miseries, all the mischiefs and disorders that are in the world; it is the foundation and fuel of hell; it is that which puts thee out of the possession and enjoyment of thyself, which doth alienate and separate thee from God the fountain of bliss and happiness, which provokes him to be thine enemy, and lays thee open every moment to the fierce revenge of his justice, and if thou dost persist and continue in it, will finally sink and oppress thee under the insupportable weight of his wrath, and make thee so weary of thyself, that thou shalt wish a thousand times that thou hadst never been; and will render thee so perfectly miserable, that thou wouldst esteem it a great happiness to exchange thy condition with the most wretched and forlorn person that ever lived upon earth, to be perpetually upon a rack, and to lie down for ever under the rage of all the most violent diseases and pains that ever afflicted mankind. Sin is all this which I have described, and will certainly bring upon thee all those evils and mischiefs which I have mentioned, and make thee far more miserable than I am able to express, or thou to conceive. And art thou not yet resolved to leave it? Shall I need to use any other arguments to set thee against it, and take thee off from the love and practice of it, than this representation which I have now made of the horrible nature and consequences of it?

And then consider, on the other hand, what it is that I am persuading thee to turn to; to thy God and duty. And would not this be a blessed change indeed! to leave the greatest evil, and to return to the chief good! For this resolution of returning to God, is nothing else but a resolution to be wise and happy, and to put thyself into the possession of that which is a greater good, if it is possible, than sin is an evil, and will render thee more happy than sin can make thee miserable. Didst thou but think what God is, what he will be to thee if thou wilt return to him, how kindly he will receive thee after all thy wanderings from him *days without number*, thou wouldest soon take up the resolution of the prodigal, and say, *I will arise, and go to my father.*

And consider likewise what it is to return to thy duty. It is nothing else but to do what becomes thee, and what

is ſuitable to the original frame of thy nature, and to the trueſt dictates of thy reaſon and conſcience, and what is not more thy duty, than it is thy intereſt and thy happineſs. For that which God requires of us, is to be righteous, and holy, and good, that is, to be like God himſelf, who is the pattern of all perfection and happineſs. It is to have our lives conformed to his will, which is always perfect holineſs and goodneſs, a ſtate of peace and tranquillity, and the very temper and diſpoſition of happineſs. It is that which is a principal and moſt eſſential ingredient into the felicity of the divine nature, and without which God would not be what he is, but a deformed, and imperfect, and miſerable being.

And if this be a true repreſentation which I have made to you, of ſin and vice on the one hand, and of God and goodneſs on the other, what can be more powerful than the ſerious conſideration of it, to engage us to a ſpeedy reſolution of leaving our ſins, and of *turning and cleaving to the Lord with full purpoſe of heart?* after this we cannot but conclude with the penitent in the text; *Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I will not offend any more: That which I ſee not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.*

3. Conſider how unreaſonable it is to be unreſolved in a caſe of ſo great moment and concernment. There is no greater argument of a man's weakneſs, than irreſolution in matters of mighty conſequence, when both the importance of the thing, and exigency of preſent circumſtances require a ſpeedy reſolution. We ſhould account it a ſtrange folly, for a man to be unreſolved in the cleareſt and plaineſt matters that concern his temporal welfare and ſafety. If a man could not determine himſelf whether he ſhould eat or ſtarve; if he were dangerouſly ſick, and could not determine whether he ſhould take phyſick or die; or if one that were in priſon could not reſolve himſelf whether he ſhould accept of liberty, and be content to be releaſed; or, if a fair eſtate were offered to him, he ſhould deſire ſeven years time to conſider whether he ſhould take it or not: this would be ſo abſurd in the common affairs of life, that a man would be thought infatuated, that ſhould be doubtful and unreſolved in caſes ſo plain, and of ſuch preſſing concern-

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ment. If a man were under the ſentence and condemnation of the law, and liable to be executed upon the leaſt intimation of the Prince's pleaſure, and a pardon were graciouſly offered to him, with this intimation, that this would probably be the laſt offer of mercy that ever would be made to him; one would think, that in this caſe a man ſhould ſoon be determined what to do, or rather that he ſhould not need to deliberate at all about it; becauſe there is no danger of raſhneſs in making haſte to ſave his life.

And yet the caſe of a ſinner is of far greater importance, and much more depends upon it, infinitely more than any temporal concernment whatſoever can amount to, even our happineſs or miſery to all eternity. And can there be any difficulty for a man to be reſolved what is to be done in ſuch a caſe? No caſe ſurely in the world can be plainer than this; whether a man ſhould leave his ſins, and return to God and his duty, or not; that is, whether a man ſhould chuſe to be happy or miſerable, unſpeakably and everlaſtingly happy, or extremely and eternally miſerable.

And the circumſtances and exigencies of our caſe do call for a ſpeedy and peremptory reſolution in this matter. The ſentence of the law is already paſt, and God may execute it upon thee every moment, and it is great mercy and forbearance not to do it. Thy life is uncertain, and thou art liable every minute to be ſnatched away and hurried out of this world. However, at the beſt, thou haſt but a little time to reſolve in; death, and judgment, and eternity, cannot be far off; and, for ought thou knoweſt, they may be even at the door. Thou art upon the matter juſt ready to be ſeized upon by death, to be ſummoned to judgment, and to be ſwallowed up of eternity: and is it not yet time, thinkeſt thou, to reſolve? wouldeſt thou have yet a little longer time to deliberate, whether thou ſhouldeſt repent and forſake thy ſins, or not? If there were difficulty in the caſe, or if there were no danger in the delay; if thou couldeſt gain time, or any thing elſe, by ſuſpending thy reſolution, there were then ſome reaſon why thou ſhouldeſt not make a ſudden determination. But thou canſt pretend none of theſe. It is evident, at firſt ſight, what

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is beſt to be done, and nothing can make it plainer. It is not a matter ſo clear and out of the controverſy, that riches are better than poverty, and eaſe better than pain, and life more deſirable than death: as it is, that it is better to break off our ſins, than to continue in the practice of them; to be reconciled to God, than to go on to provoke him; to be holy and virtuous, than to be wicked and vitious; to be *heirs of eternal glory*, than to be *veſſels of wrath fitted for deſtruction*.

And there is infinite danger in theſe delays. For if thy ſoul be any thing to thee, thou ventureſt that; if thou haſt any tenderneſs and regard for thy eternal intereſt, thou runneſt the hazard of that; if heaven and hell be any thing to thee, thou incurreſt the danger of loſing the one, and falling into the other.

And thou gaineſt nothing by continuing unreſolved. If death and judgment would tarry thy leiſure, and wait till thou hadſt brought thy thoughts to ſome iſſue, and were reſolved what to do, it were ſomething: but thy irreſolution in this matter will be ſo far from keeping back death and judgment, that it will both haſten and aggravate them, both make them to come the ſooner, and to be the heavier when they come; becauſe thou abuſeſt the goodneſs of God, and *deſpiſeſt his patience and long-ſuffering, which ſhould lead thee* and draw thee on *to repentance*, and not keep thee back. Hereby thou encourageſt thyſelf in thy lewd and riotous courſes, and, becauſe *thy Lord delayeth his coming*, art the more negligent and extravagant. Hear what doom our Lord pronounceth upon ſuch ſlothful and wicked ſervants, Luke xii. 46. *The Lord of that ſervant will come, in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in ſunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers*. None ſo like to be ſurprized, and to be ſeverely handled by the juſtice of God, as thoſe that trifle with his patience.

4. Conſider how much reſolution would tend to the ſettling of our minds, and making our lives comfortable. There is nothing that perplexeth and diſquieteth a man more, than to be unreſolved in the great and important concernments of his life. What anxiety and confuſion is there in our ſpirits, whilſt we are doubtful

ful and undetermined about such matters? How are we divided and distracted, when our reason and judgment direct us one way, and our lusts and affections bias us to the contrary; when we are convinced and satisfied what is best for us, and yet are disaffected to our own interest? Such a man is all the while self-condemned, and acts with the perpetual regret of his reason and conscience; and whenever he reflects upon himself, he is offended and angry with himself, his life and all his actions are uneasy and displeasing to him; and there is no way for this man to be at peace, but to put an end to this conflict one way or other, either by conquering his reason or his will. The former is very difficult, nothing being harder than for a sinner to lay his conscience asleep, after it is once thoroughly awakened; he may charm it for a while, but every little occasion will rouze it again, and renew his trouble; so that tho' a man may have some truce with his conscience, yet he can never come to a firm and settled peace this way; but if by a vigorous resolution a man would but conquer his will, his mind would be at rest, and there would be a present calm in his spirit. And why should we be such enemies to our own peace, and to the comfort and contentment of our lives, as not to take this course, and thereby rid ourselves, at once, of that which really, and at the bottom, is the ground of all the trouble and disquiet of our lives?

SER.

SERMON CLXIX.

The nature and neceſſity of holy reſolution.

JOB xxxiv. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I have born chaſtiſ-
ment, I will not offend any more; that which I ſee no
teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no mor

The third ſermon on this text.

THeſe words are a deſcription of the temper an behaviour of a true penitent, his confeſſion ſins, and reſolution of amendment. Concern ing reſolution, I have ſhewn what it is in general: wha is the ſpecial object or matter of this kind of reſolution what is implied in a ſincere reſolution of leaving our ſin and returning to God and our duty: that, in this reſolu tion, the very eſſence and formal nature of repentanc doth conſiſt: and have offered ſome conſiderations, t convince men of the neceſſity and fitneſs of this reſolu tion, and to keep them ſtedfaſt to it. As,

1. That this reſolution is nothing but what under th influence of God's grace is in our power.

2. The things themſelves, which we are to reſolve up on, are the ſtrongeſt arguments that can be for ſuch reſolution.

3. How unreaſonable it is for men to be unreſolved i a caſe of ſo great moment.

4. How much this reſolution will tend to the ſettlin of our minds, and making our lives comfortable. I pro eeed to the conſiderations which remain.

5. Then, Be pleaſed to conſider, that a ſtrong and vi gorous reſolution would make the whole work of religi on eaſy to us, it would conquer all difficulties which at tend a holy and religious courſe of life, eſpecially at ou firſt entrance into it: becauſe reſolution brings our mind o a point, and unites all the ſtrength and force of ou

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ſouls in one great deſign, and makes us vigorous and firm, couragious and conſtant in the proſecution of it; and, without this, it is impoſſible to hold out long, and to reſiſt the ſtrong propenſions and inclinations of our corrupt nature, which, if we be not firmly reſolved, will return, and by degrees, gain upon us; it will be impoſſible to break through temptations, and to gain-ſay the importunity of them: when the devil and the world ſollicit us, we ſhall not be able to ſay them nay, but ſhall be apt to yield to them.

There are many who have had faint wiſhes, and cold deſires, and half purpoſes of leading a new and better life: but having not taken up a firm reſolution in the caſe, having not determined themſelves by a ſevere purpoſe, a little thing ſways them, and brings them back to their former courſe; it is no hard matter to divert them, and engage them another way; they are *ſhaken with every wind* of temptation, every little blaſt of oppoſition and perſecution turns them back, and carries them to the ways of ſin: whereas reſolution fixeth a man's ſpirit, and makes it moſt ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, and ſets him upon a rock, which, *when the winds blow, and the rain falls, and the floods come*, abides firm againſt all impreſſions.

If I would give the moſt probable and uſeful advice to engage and continue a man in a good courſe, I would commend to him a deliberate and firm reſolution. David proved this way with very happy ſucceſs, Pſal. cxix. 106. *I have ſworn*, ſays he, *and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* This was a ſecurity to him againſt all aſſaults, and nothing could turn him from his courſe afterwards; not the dangers he was expoſed to, ver. 109. *My ſoul is continually in my hand, yet do I not forget thy law;* not the ſnares of wicked men that were laid for him, ver. 110. *The wicked have laid a ſnare for me, yet I erred not from thy precepts.* By virtue of this reſolution he could riſe up in defiance of all thoſe that would have tempted him to any ſinful action, ver. 115. *Depart from me ye evil doers, for I will keep the commands of my God.*

When a man is thus reſolved upon a holy courſe, he is not eaſily diverted from it, and is able to reſiſt the impor-

portunity and flattery of temptations, and to ſay to them as men are wont to do, when they are fully and firmly reſolved upon any thing; *Let me alone, I am not to be moved, it is in vain to urge me, I am reſolved to the contrary.* Thus ſtiff and reſolute men can be in other caſes, where there is not near that cauſe and reaſon for it: and if we would but take up a generous reſolution to break off our ſins, and to live better lives, this would be the way to conquer that liſtleſſneſs and unwillingneſs which hinders us from engaging in a good courſe, and is the cauſe of ſo many lame excuſes and unreaſonable delays. It is the want of reſolution, and the weakneſs of our reſolutions, which is the true reaſon why we are not more equal, and conſtant, and uniform in the ways of religion; but are religious only by fits and ſtarts, in a heat, and during ſome preſent trouble and conviction of mind. *The double minded man is unſtable*, ſays St. James, *in all his ways.* When a man is of ſeveral minds, he is eaſily moved one way or other.

6. And laſtly, Conſider the infinite danger of remaining unreſolved. *The evil day may overtake you*, while you are deliberating whether you ſhould avoid it or not. A ſtate of ſin is liable to ſo many hazards, hath ſo many dangers continually threatening it, and hanging over it, that it is the moſt imprudent thing in the world to linger in it. It is like Lot's ſtaying in Sodom when the Lord was going to deſtroy it, when fire and brimſtone were juſt ready to be rained down from heaven upon it. Whilſt men are lingering in a ſinful ſtate, if *the Lord be not merciful to them*, they will be conſumed. Therefore it concerns thee, ſinner, to determine thyſelf ſpeedily, and to make haſte out of this dangerous condition, *to eſcape for thy life, leſt ſome evil overtake thee*, and leſt death finding thee unreſolved, determine thy caſe for thee, and put it out of all doubt, and paſt all remedy.

How many have been cut off in their irreſolution? And becauſe they would not determine what to do, God hath concluded their caſe for them, and *ſworn in his wrath, that they ſhould not enter into his reſt.* It may be thou promiſeſt thyſelf the ſpace of many years to reſolve in: *Thou fool, this night thy ſoul may be required*

ed of thee, and whilst thou art unresolved what to do, God is resolving what to do with thee, and putting a period to his patience, and long expectation of thy repentance: and thou knowest not how soon God may do this, and make an immutable determination concerning thee. And wo unto thee, when God hath resolved thus.

Suppose thou shouldest be snatched out of the world, and hurried before the dreadful tribunal of God, in this doubtful and unresolved state. And this is possible enough; because thou hast no certain tenure of thy life, thou art at no time secured from the stroke of death: nay, it is probable enough, because thou art every moment liable to ten thousand accidents, any one of which may snap in sunder the thread of thy life. And suppose this should happen to thee, what dost thou imagine would become of thee? Wouldest not thou then wish a thousand times, that thou hadst resolved in time? How glad wouldest thou then be, that it were possible for thee to retrieve and call back but one of those days without number, which thou hast so vainly trifled away, that thou mightest resolve upon the things of thy peace! but thou wouldest not do it in that thy day, which God afforded thee to this purpose; thou hast let the opportunity slip out of thy hands, and it will never be in thy power again, but *the things of thy peace will be for ever hid from thine eyes.*

Why wilt thou then be so foolish, as to run thyself upon the evident hazard of losing heaven, and being miserable for ever? Why wilt thou make work for a sadder and longer repentance, than that which thou dost now so carefully decline? This was the case of the foolish virgins in the parable, Matth. xxv. who made account to be ready to meet the bridegroom at his coming, but took no care in time to get oil into their lamps. They thought the bridegroom would tarry yet a while longer, and therefore they slumbered and slept in great security: but at midnight, when the cry was made, *Behold the bridegroom cometh;* then they arose, and in a great hurry and confusion went about trimming their lamps; they were resolved then, they would have begged or bought oil; and would have been at any pains or

coſt for it: but then it was too late; for the door was ſuddenly ſhut againſt them, and no importunity could prevail to have it opened to them.

Canſt thou be contented to have the door ſhut againſt thee, and when thou ſhalt cry, *Lord, open unto me*, to have him return this anſwer, *Depart from me, I know thee not?* If thou canſt not, reſolve to prevent this in time.

Didſt thou but ſee, and know, and feel what the miſerable do in hell, thou couldeſt not linger thus, thou couldeſt not continue ſo long unreſolved. Why the time will come, when thou wilt reflect ſeverely upon thyſelf, and ſay, that I ſhould ever be ſo ſtupid and ſottiſh, to be unreſolved in a matter of ſuch infinite concernment to me! How often was I admoniſhed and convinced of the neceſſity of changing my courſe? How many inward motions had I to that purpoſe? How often did my own reaſon and conſcience, and the holy Spirit of God, by his frequent and friendly ſuggeſtions, put me upon this? How often was I juſt upon the brink of reſolving? I reſolved to reſolve; but ſtill I delayed it, till death ſeized upon me unreſolved: and now the opportunity is loſt, and never to be recovered again. I would not in time reſolve to be wiſe and happy; and now by the ſentence of the juſt and unchangeable God, it is reſolved that I muſt be miſerable to all eternity.

How ſhould theſe conſiderations quicken us, who have yet theſe opportunities in our hands; which thoſe who neglected and trifled them away, would now purchaſe at any rate! I ſay, how ſhould theſe conſiderations which I have propoſed, move us to take up a preſent reſolution in the matter! Conſider theſe things, ſinner, and lay them ſeriouſly to heart, and ſay to thyſelf, fool that I have been, to be unreſolved ſo long; not to determine myſelf in a matter of ſuch mighty conſequence: to continue ſo long in ſuſpence, whether I had beſt go to heaven or hell, and which was moſt adviſable, to be happy or miſerable for ever! Bleſſed be God that hath been pleaſed to exerciſe ſo much patience and long ſuffering towards me, that hath ſpared me ſo long, when he might have taken me away, and cut me off unreſolved. My ſoul lies at ſtake, and for ought I know, all eternity depends

pends upon my present and speedy resolution. And now by God's grace I will not delay one moment more, I will hang no longer between heaven and hell. I shall now, in the

Second Place, offer some considerations to persuade those that have taken up this good resolution, to pursue it, and to promote it to practice and execution, and to keep firm and stedfast to it. And to this end, be pleased to consider these three things.

1. What an argument it is of vanity and inconstancy, to change this resolution, whilst the reason of it stands good, and is not changed. I suppose that thou wert once resolved to leave thy sins, and to return to God and thy duty. Why dost thou not pursue this resolution? Why dost thou not persist in it? Surely there appeared to thee some reason why thou didst take it up; and if the reason remain, and appear still the same to thee that it did, how comes it to pass that thou hast altered thy mind, and changed thy purpose? Either the case is the same it was, when thou tookest up this resolution; or it is not. If it be altered, then thou hast reason to change thy resolution; if it be not, thou hast the same reason to continue in it, that thou hadst to take it up. Shew then, if thou canst, wherein it is changed? Wert thou mistaken before about the nature of sin, and the pernicious consequences of it; or about the nature of God and goodness? Hast thou any thing now to plead for sin, which thou didst not know or consider before? Art thou now satisfied that sin is not so evil and unreasonable a thing, as thou didst once apprehend, or that it does not threaten thee with so much danger as thou didst fear? Hath God altered his opinion of it, or is he become more favourable to it than he was? Hast thou received any news lately from heaven by any good hands, that God hath reversed his threatenings against sin, or that he hath adjourned the judgment of the world, *sine die*, without any set time? That he hath set the devils at liberty, and released them from their chains of darkness, and hath quenched and put out the fire of hell? Or art thou satisfied that there is no such being as God in the world, or that he is not so good as thou didst apprehend him to be, or that he will not reward those that di-

ligently ſerve him? Haſt thou found upon trial, tha holineſs and virtue are but empty names, and that ther is nothing in them? That there is not that pleaſure an peace in keeping the commandments of God which thou wert told of? I am ſure thou canſt not with reaſon pre tend any thing of all this. Thy reaſon, and conſcience and experience cannot ſpeak one word on the behalf o ſin, or give any teſtimony againſt God and his holy ways. And if the caſe be the ſame it was, nothing but thine own vanity and ficklenes, or ſome worſe reaſon, could move thee to alter thy purpoſe.

2. Let it be farther conſidered, that if we be not conſtant to our reſolution, all we have done is loſt. If thou repenteſt of thy repentance, it will not prove *a repentance to ſalvation.* As good to have ſtayed in Sodom, as to look back after thou art come out of it. Thus God tells us by the Prophet, Ezek. xxxiii. 12, 13. *Therefore thou Son of man, ſay unto the children of thy people, the righteouſneſs of the righteous ſhall not deliver him in the day of his tranſgreſſion: neither ſhall the righteous be able to live in the day that he ſinneth. When I ſay to the righteous, he ſhall ſurely live: if he truſt to his own righteouſneſs, and commit iniquity, all his righteouſneſs ſhall not be remembered: but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he ſhall die for it.* So that whatever we have done in the work of repentance, what reſolutions ſoever we have taken up; if afterwards we give over and let them fall, all that we have done is loſt, and will come to nothing.

3. Let us conſider in the laſt place, that if we be not conſtant to our reſolution, we ſhall not only loſe all that we have done, but we ſhall thereby render our condition much worſe. *Remember Lot's wife,* who after ſhe was eſcaped out of Sodom, looked back, and was made a particular and laſting monument of God's wrath and diſpleaſure; which ſeems to be meant by that expreſſion of her being *turned into a pillar of ſalt,* that is, a laſting monument. Prov. xiv. 14. *The backſlider in heart ſhall be filled with his own ways. Shall be filled with his own ways;* this expreſſion doth ſignify a moſt heavy and dreadful curſe upon thoſe who fall off from their good

purpoſe

purpose and resolution, that they shall have sorrow and trouble enough upon it. For so likewise, Prov. i. 26, 27. where God threatens wilful and obstinate sinners with the heaviest judgments, that he would *laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear comes; when their fear comes as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind, and fear and anguish cometh upon them;* he adds, as the sum of all other judgments, that *they shall eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices.* Heb. x. 38. *But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him;* which words are a μειωσις, and signify a great deal more than seems to be expressed. *My soul shall have no pleasure in him;* that is, let such an one expect the effects of God's fiercest wrath and displeasure. For so the Hebrews are wont to express things that are great and unspeakable, when they cannot sufficiently set them forth; by saying less, they say more. So Psal. v. 4. where it is said, *Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness,* the Psalmist means, and would have us to understand it so, that God is so far from taking any pleasure in the sins of men, that he bears the most violent hatred and displeasure against them. So when the Apostle here says, *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him,* he means that it is not to be expressed how God will deal with such persons, and how severely his justice will handle them. To the same purpose is that declaration, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. *For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them, not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.* The condition of all impenitent sinners is very sad; but of apostates much worse: not only because the sins which they commit afterwards are much greater, receiving a new aggravation, which the sins of those who are simply impenitent are not capable of; but likewise because such persons are usually more wicked afterwards. For they that break loose from sincere purposes and resolutions of a better

courſe, do by this very thing in a great meaſure ſear and conquer their conſciences, and then no wonder if afterwards *they give up themſelves to commit all iniquity with greedineſs.* When after long abſtinence men return to ſin again, their luſts are more fierce and violent; like a man who, after long faſting, returns to his meat with a more raging appetite. This our Saviour ſets forth to us in the parable of the unclean ſpirit's returning again, and taking poſſeſſion of the man, after he had left him, Matth. xii. 43, 44, 45. *When the unclean ſpirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, ſeeking reſt, and findeth none. Then he ſaith, I will return into my houſe from whence I came out: and when he is come, he findeth it empty, ſwept, and garniſhed. Then goeth he, and taketh with himſelf ſeven other ſpirits more wicked than himſelf; and the end of that man is worſe than his beginning.* The moral of which is, that when a man hath once left his ſins, if afterward he entertain thoughts of returning to them again, ſin will return upon him with redoubled force and ſtrength, and his heart will be ſo much the more prepared and diſpoſed for the entertaining of more and greater vices; and his leaving his ſins for a time, will be but like a running back, that he may leap with greater violence into hell and deſtruction.

Beſides, that ſuch perſons do the greateſt injury to God and the holy ways of religion that can be, by forſaking them after they have owned and approved them. For it will not be ſo much regarded, what wicked men, who have always been ſo, talk againſt God and religion; becauſe they do not talk from experience, but *ſpeak evil of the things which they know not:* whereas thoſe who forſake the ways of religion after they have once engaged in them, do diſparage religion more effectually, and reproach it with greater advantage: becauſe they pretend to ſpeak from the experience they have had of it; they have tried both the ways of ſin, and the ways of religion, and after experience of both, they return to ſin again: which, what is it but to proclaim to the world, that the ways of ſin and vice are rather to be choſen than the ways of holineſs and virtue; that the devil is a better maſter than God, and that a ſinful and wicked

wicked life yields more pleasure and greater advantages, than are to be had in keeping the commandments of God? And this must needs be a high provocation, and a heavy aggravation of our ruin. Let these considerations prevail with us to pursue this holy resolution, after we have taken it up, and to persist in it. There remains only the

VI. And last particular which I proposed to be spoken to, *viz.* To add some directions for the maintaining and making good of this resolution of repentance and amendment; and they shall be these three.

1. Let us do all in the strength of God, considering our necessary and essential dependence upon him, and that *without him*, and the assistance of his grace, *we can do nothing*. *We are not*, as the Apostle tells us, *sufficient of ourselves, as of ourselves*, that is, without the assistance of God's holy Spirit, *to think any thing* that is good; much less to resolve upon it. *It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure;* that is, of his own goodness, as the same Apostle speaks, Phil. ii. 13. It is God that upholds us in being, and from whom we have all our power as to natural actions; but as to spiritual things, considering the great corruption and depravation of human nature, we stand in need of a more especial and immediate assistance.

If we know any thing of ourselves, we cannot but know what foolish and ignorant cratures we are, how weak and impotent, how averse and opposite to any thing that is good. And therefore it is wise counsel in all cases, but chiefly in spiritual matters, which Solomon gives, Prov. iii. 5, 6. *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding. Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he shall direct thy steps.* Let us then address ourselves to God, in the words of the holy Prophet, Jer. x. 23. *O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself, and that it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps.* And let us beg of him, that he would consider our case, commiserate our weakness, and pity our impotency, and that he would join his strength to us, and grant us the assistance of his grace and holy Spirit, to put us upon sincere resolutions of a new life, and

and to keep us conſtant and ſtedfaſt to them; *to ope the eyes of our minds, and to turn us from darkneſs t light, and from the power of Satan and our luſts unto God that we may repent and turn to God, and do works meet fo repentance, that ſo we may receive forgiveneſs of ſins, an an inheritance among them that are ſanctified through faith that is in Chriſt.*

And for our encouragement in this matter, God hath bid us to apply ourſelves to him; and he hath promiſed not to be wanting to us, in words as expreſs and univerſal as can well be deviſed. Jam. i. 6. *If any man lack wiſdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth no man; but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering*, that is, not doubting but that God is both able and willing to give what he aſks. And Luke xi. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. *I ſay unto you, ask and it ſhall be given you; ſeek, and ye ſhall find; knock, and it ſhall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that ſeeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it ſhall be opened. If a ſon ſhall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a ſtone? Or, if he ask a fiſh, will he for a fiſh give him a ſerpent? Or, if he ſhall ask an egg, will he offer him a ſcorpion? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* To encourage our faith, our Saviour uſeth ſuch an argument as may give us the greateſt aſſurance. We are commonly confident, that our earthly parents will not deny us thoſe things that are good and neceſſary for us, though they may be otherwiſe evil: *How much more then ſhall our heavenly Father*, who is eſſentially and infinitely good, *give his holy Spirit to us?* And if this be not enough, St. Matthew uſeth a larger expreſſion, *How much more ſhall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?* If there be any thing that is good, and we ſtand in need of it, and earneſtly pray to God for it, we may be confident that he will give it us.

2. We ought to be very watchful over ourſelves, conſidering our weakneſs and wavering, and inſtability and ficklene's, the treachery and deceitfulneſs of our own hearts, and the malice of Satan. It will be a great

great while before the habits of sin be so weakened and subdued, as that we shall have no propension to return to them again; so that our hearts will be often endeavouring to return to their former posture, and, *like a deceitful bow*, which is not firmly strong, *to start back*. And besides the deceitfulness of sin and our own hearts, the devil is very malicious, and his malice will make him vigilant to watch all advantages against us; and his great design will be to shake our resolution; for if that stand, he knows his kingdom will fall, and therefore he raiseth all his batteries against this fort, and labours by all means to undermine it; and nothing will be matter of greater triumph to him, than to gain a person that was revolted from him, and resolved to leave his service. If therefore thou expectest God's grace and assistance to keep thee stedfast to thy resolution, do not neglect thyself, but *keep thy heart with all diligence*, and watch carefully over thyself: for because *God worketh in us both to will and to do*, therefore he expects that *we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling*, lest by our own carelessness and neglect we should miscarry.

3. Let us frequently renew and reinforce our resolutions, more especially when we think of coming to the sacrament, and approaching the holy table of the Lord. Nothing is more apt to beget in us good resolutions, and to strengthen them, than to consider the dreadful sufferings of the Son of God for our sins, which are so lively set forth and represented to us in his holy sacrament, which as it is on God's part a seal and confirmation of his grace and love to us, so on our part it ought to be a solemn ratification of our covenant with God, *to depart from iniquity, and to walk before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives.*

SER

SERMON CLXX.

The nature and neceſſity of reſtitution.

LUKE xix. 8, 9.

And if I have taken any thing from any man by falſe accuſation, I reſtore him fourfold. And Jeſus ſaid unto him, This day is ſalvation come to this houſe.

The firſt ſermon on this text.

ONE particular and eminent fruit of true repentance, is the making of reſtitution and ſatisfaction to thoſe whom we have injured. As for God we can make no ſatisfaction and compenſation to him, for the injuries we have done him by our ſins; all that we can do in reſpect of God, is to confeſs our ſins to him, to make acknowledgment of our miſcarriages, to be heartily troubled for what we have done, and not to do the like for the future. But for injuries done to men, we may in many caſes make reparation and ſatisfaction. And this, as it is one of the beſt ſigns and evidences of a true repentance; ſo it is one of the moſt proper and genuine effects of it: for this is as much as in us lies, to undo what we have done, and to unſin our ſins.

But, becauſe the practice of this duty doth ſo interfere with the intereſt of men, and conſequently it will be very difficult to convince men of their duty in this particular, and to perſuade them to it; therefore I deſign to handle this particular fruit and effect of a true repentance by itſelf, from theſe words which contain in them,

1. The fruit and effect of Zacheus his converſion and repentance; *If I have taken any thing from any man, I reſtore him fourfold.*

2. The

2. The declaration which our Saviour makes hereupon of the truth of his repentance and converſion, and the happy ſtate he was thereby put into. *And Jeſus ſaid unto him, This day is ſalvation come to this houſe, for as much as he alſo is the ſon of Abraham;* as if he had ſaid, By theſe fruits and effects it appears, that this is a repentance to ſalvation; and this man whom you look upon as a ſinner and a Heathen, may, by better right, call Abraham father, than any of you formal Phariſees and Jews, who glory ſo much in being the children of Abraham.

I. The fruit and effect of of Zacheus's converſion and repentance; *and if*, &c.

This Zacheus, as you find at the ſecond verſe, was chief of the publicans, which was an office of great odium and infamy among the Jews, they being the collectors of the tribute which the Roman Emperor, under whoſe power the Jews then were, did exact from them. And becauſe theſe publicans farmed this tribute of the Emperor at a certain rent, they made a gain out of it to themſelves, by exacting and requiring more of the people than was due upon that account; ſo that their calling was very infamous, upon three accounts.

1. Becauſe they were the inſtruments of oppreſſing their countrymen; for ſo they looked upon the tax they paid to the Romans, as a great oppreſſion.

2. Becauſe they were forced by the neceſſity of their calling to have familiar converſation with Heathens, whom they looked upon as ſinners. Hence the phraſe uſed by the Apoſtle, of *ſinners of the Gentiles*. And hence likewiſe probably it is, that *publicans and ſinners, publicans and Heathens*, are joined ſeveral times together, becauſe of the occaſions of frequent converſe which the publicans had with Heathens.

3. But principally they were odious becauſe of the common injuſtice and oppreſſion which they uſed in the management of their calling, by fraud and violence extorting more than was due, to inhance the profit of their places. Hence it is, that this ſort of officers have been generally branded, and reckoned among the worſt ſort of men. So he in the comedy, πάντες τελῶναι, πάντες εἰσὶν ἅρπαγες, *all publicans are rapacious or robbers.*

And

And this is moſt probably the ſin which Zacheus here repents of, and in regard to which he promiſes reſtitution; ἤ τινος ἐσυκοφάντησα, *and if I have taken any thing from any man by falſe accuſation*; ſo we render the words in our tranſlation; but the word ἐσυκοφάντησα ſignifies more generally, *if I have been injurious to any one, if I have wronged any man*, as appears by the conſtant uſe of this word by the LXX, who by this word do tranſlate the moſt general Hebrew words, which ſignify any kind of injury or oppreſſion, either by fraud, or violence, or calumny. So that there is no reaſon here to reſtrain it, *wronging men by falſe accuſation*: for Zacheus his ſin being in all probability extorting more than was due, this might as eaſily be done many other ways, as *by falſe accuſation*. And that this was the common ſin of the publicans, appears by the counſel which John the Baptiſt gives them, Luke iii. 12, 13. *Then came alſo the publicans to be baptized, and ſaid unto him, Maſter, what ſhall we do? And he ſaid unto them, exact no more than that which is appointed you*; that is, do not by fraud or violence extort from any man any more than the tribute which is laid upon him.

So that Zacheus here promiſeth, that if he had been injurious to any man in his office, by extorting more than was due, he would reſtore to him fourfold. And if Zacheus calculated his eſtate right, and intended to reſerve any part of it to himſelf, which is but reaſonable to ſuppoſe, it could be no very great part of his eſtate which was injuriouſly got; and I am afraid a far ſmaller proportion than many are guilty of, who yet paſs for very honeſt men in compariſon of the publicans. The text ſaith, he was *a rich man*. Suppoſe he were worth ten or twelve thouſand pounds; half he gives to the poor, that was well got, or elſe his whole eſtate could not have made fourfold reſtitution for it. Suppoſe he reſerved a thouſand or two to himſelf, then, at the rate of reſtoring fourfold, not above a thouſand can be injuriouſly got, that is, about a penny in the ſhilling. I am afraid that now-a days there are few ſuch moderate oppreſſors; nay, it is poſſible that the proportion of his eſtate injuriouſly got might be

be much leſs; more it could not eaſily be. But whatever it was, he does not plead that by way of excuſe for himſelf, he freely confeſſeth he had ſinned in this kind, and offers reſtitution to the utmoſt, much more than the law did require in ſuch caſes.

II. You have the declaration our Saviour makes hereupon, of the truth of his repentance and converſion, and the happy ſtate he was thereby put into, *This day is ſalvation come to this houſe.*

The obſervation I ſhall make from hence is this, that reſtitution and ſatisfaction for the injuries we have done to others, is a proper and genuine effect of true repentance. I know the text only ſpeaks of reſtitution in caſe of oppreſſion and exaction: but becauſe there is the ſame reaſon why reſtitution ſhould be made for all other injuries, I think I may, without any force or violence to my text, very well make it the foundation of a more general diſcourſe concerning reſtitution.

In the handling of this I ſhall,

1. Open to you the nature of this duty.

2. Confirm the truth of the propoſition, by ſhewing the neceſſity of it.

3. Endeavour to perſuade men to the diſcharge of this neceſſary duty.

Firſt, For the opening the nature of this duty, I will conſider,

1. The act.

2. The latitude or extent of the object, as I may call it, or the matter about which it is converſant.

3. The manner how it is to be done.

4. The meaſure of it.

5. The perſons who are bound to make reſtitution, and to whom it is to be made

6. The time in which it is to be done.

7 The order of doing it, where more are injured, and reſtitution cannot be made at once to all.

1. For the act Reſtitution is nothing elſe but the making reparation or ſatisfaction to another for the injuries we have done him. It is to reſtore a man to the good condition from which, contrary to right, and to our duty, we have removed him. Reſtitution is only done in caſe of injury. Another man may be damaged and pre-

judiced by many ways, and we not be bound to make reſtitution; becauſe there are many caſes wherein a man deſerves the prejudice we do to him: As when we are inſtruments of inflicting upon a man the puniſhment which the law doth ſentence him to. And there are many caſes wherein we may be prejudicial to others, and cannot help it. As a man that is ſick of a contagious diſeaſe, may infect others that are about him: but he is not injurious to them; becauſe it is not his fault, but his infelicity.

II. For the latitude and extent of the object, as I may call it, or the matter about which it is converſant. It extends to all kind of injuries, which may be reduced to theſe two heads; either we injure a perſon with or without his conſent.

1. Some injuries are done to perſons with their conſent. Such are moſt of thoſe injuries which are done to the ſouls of men, when we command, or counſel, or encourage them to ſin, or draw them in by our example. For the maxim, *Volenti non fit injuria*, "there is no injury done to a man that is willing," is not ſo to be underſtood, as that a man may not in ſome ſort conſent to his own wrong: for abſolute freedom and willingneſs ſuppoſeth that a man is wholly left to himſelf, and that he underſtands fully what he does. And in this ſenſe no man ſins willingly, that is, perfectly knowing, and actually conſidering what he does; and commands, and perſuaſion, and example, are a kind of violence; yet none of theſe hinder, but that a man in theſe caſes may ſufficiently conſent to what he does. But yet he is not ſo perfectly free, as to excuſe him that draws him into ſin by theſe ways. So likewiſe, when a man refuſeth to do that which is his duty without a reward: for inſtance, to do juſtice to another; he is injurious in ſo doing: but yet not altogether without the conſent of him whom he injures.

2. Injuries are done to perſons without their conſent. And theſe, though they are not always the greateſt miſchiefs, yet they are the greateſt injuries. And theſe injuries are done either by fraud and cunning, or by violence and oppreſſion; either by over-reaching another man in wit, or over-bearing him by power. And theſe

uſually

uſually either reſpect the bodies of men, or their eſtates, or their good name. The bodies of men. He that maims another, or does him any other injury in his limb or health, either by fraud or force, is bound, ſo far as he is able, to make reparation for the injury. Or they reſpect the eſtates of men. If by cunning, or by violence, or by falſe teſtimony or accuſation, thou haſt hindered a man of any benefit, which otherways would have come to him, thou art bound to reſtitution. If by thy power or intereſt, by thy knowledge in the law, or ſkill in buſineſs, thou haſt directly and avowedly helped and aſſiſted another to do injuſtice to his neighbour, thou art bound to reſtitution; though not as the principal, yet as the acceſſary. If thou haſt over-reached thy brother in any contract, making advantage of his ignorance or unſkilfulneſs; if thou haſt made a gain of his neceſſity; if thou haſt by thy power and intereſt, or by any more violent and forcible way detained his right, or taken away that which was his, thou art bound to make reparation for theſe injuries, to reſtore that which thou haſt borrowed, to return the pledge which thou haſt wrongfully kept, to releaſe unconſcionable forfeitures, to pay debts, to make ſatisfaction for frauds and cheats, to take off all unjuſt invaſions and ſurprizals of eſtates: yea, though the fraud be ſuch that thou art not liable to make ſatisfaction by any human law, yet thou art as much bound to it in conſcience to God and thy duty, as if thou hadſt ſtolen, or taken it by violence from thy neighbour. For in truth and reality, fraud is as great an injury as violence, although human laws cannot take cognizance of it, ſo as to relieve every man that is over-reached in a bargain: Nay, of the two it is worſe; for whenever thou deceiveſt a man in this kind, thou doſt not only wrong him in point of eſtate, but thou abuſeſt his underſtanding.

And ſo likewiſe in reſpect of a man's fame and reputation. If thou haſt hurt any man's good name by ſlander or calumny, by falſe witneſs, by rendering him ridiculous, or any other way, thou art bound to give ſuch ſatisfaction as the thing is capable of; or if there be any other injury which I have not mentioned, thou art obliged to make reparation for it.

III. As to the manner how reſtitution is to be made.

1. Thou art bound to do it voluntarily, and of thy own accord, tho' the perſon injured do not know who it was that did him the injury, though he do not ſeek reparation by law. When a man is forced by law to make reſtitution, it is not a virtue, but neceſſity; this is not a fruit of repentance and a good mind, but of good law. And that thou doſt not do it, unleſs the law compel thee to it, is an argument thou wouldeſt not have done it if thou couldeſt have avoided it. And though the thing be done, yet thou haſt not done it, but the law; and unleſs thou heartily repent of thy crime, the injury ſtill lies at thy door, and in God's account thou art as guilty as if no reſtitution had been made. Not that thou art bound in this caſe to make new reſtitution over again; but thou art bound to bewail thy neglect, that thou didſt not do it voluntarily and without the compulſion of the law.

2. Thou muſt do it in kind, if the thing be capable of it, and the injured party demand it. Thou muſt reſtore the very thing which thou hadſt deprived thy neighbour of, if it be ſuch a thing as can be reſtored, and be ſtill in thy power, unleſs he voluntarily accept of ſome other thing in exchange.

3. If thou canſt not reſtore it in kind, thou art bound to reſtore it in value, in ſomething that is as good. As for ſpiritual injuries done to the ſouls of men, we are bound to make ſuch reparation and compenſation as we can. Thoſe whom we have drawn into ſin, and engaged in wicked courſes, by our influence and example, or by neglect of our duty towards them, we are ſo far as becomes the relation we ſtand in to them, to make acknowledgment of our fault, to endeavour by our inſtruction and counſel to reclaim them from thoſe ſins we led them into, and *to recover them out of the ſnare of the devil*; and ſhould never be at reſt till we have done as much or more for the furtherance of their ſalvation, and helping them forwards towards heaven, as we did contribute before to their ruin and deſtruction. If we have violated any one's chaſtity, we are bound to marry them, if it was done upon that condition, and if they require it, thou art bound to keep and maintain thoſe children which are the fruit of thy luſt, and to make reparation

to

to the perſon whom thou haſt injured, by dowry or otherwiſe.

If thou haſt defrauded and injured any man in his good name, thou art obliged to make him a compenſation by acknowledgment of thy fault, by a ſtudious vindication of him, and by doing him honour, and repairing his credit in all fitting ways. And if the injury be irreparable (as it frequently happens, that we can hardly ſo effectually vindicate a man, as we can defame him; and it is ſeldom ſeen that thoſe wounds which are given to mens reputation are perfectly healed;) I ſay, if the injury be irreparable, eſpecially if it prove really prejudicial to a man in his calling and civil intereſt; if no other ſatisfaction will be accepted, it is to be made in money, *which*, (Solomon ſays) *anſwers all things*; and the rather, becauſe the reaſon and equity of human laws hath thought fit to aſſign this way of ſatisfaction in many caſes upon actions of ſcandal and defamation. And whatever the law would give, in any caſe, if it could be proved, that is the leaſt we are bound in conſcience to do when we are guilty to ourſelves, though the law cannot take hold of us.

So likewiſe, if thou haſt wounded a man, thou art bound to pay the cure, to repair to him and his relations the diſability for his calling, and his way of livelihood and ſubſiſtence, which he hath contracted by thy injury. And ſo for falſe impriſonment, the real detriment which comes to him by it, is to be made amends for: And ſo in all other caſes, the injured perſon is ſo far as is poſſible to be reſtored to the good condition in which he was before the injury.

IV. As to the meaſure and proportion of the reſtitution we are to make: Zacheus here offers fourfold, which was much beyond what any law required in like caſes. The meaſure of reſtitution by the judicial law of the Jews, did very much vary according to the kind and degree of the injury. In ſome caſes a man was only bound to ſimple reſtitution; but then he was to do it to the full, Exod. xxii. 5, 6. And ſo if that which is another man's be *delivered unto his neighbour to keep, and be ſtolen from him, he is to make reſtitution thereof*, ver. 12. *And ſo if a man borrow ought of his neighbour,*

and it be hurt or die, the owner thereof not being with it, he ſhall ſurely make it good, ver. 14. *But for all manner of treſpaſſes,* by way of *theft, whether it be for ox, for aſs, for ſheep, for raiment, or for any manner of loſt thing, which another challengeth to be his, he whom the Judge ſhall condemn, ſhall pay double to his neighbour,* ver. 9. that is, if it be of *a living creature,* if the theft be *found in his his hands alive, whether it be ox, or aſs, or ſheep, he ſhall reſtore double,* ver. 4. But if a man did *ſteal an ox or a ſheep, and did kill it or ſell it,* he was to reſtore *five oxen, for an ox, and four ſheep, for a ſheep.* And thus we find David judged upon Nathan's parable of the rich man, who had taken the poor man's only lamb, and killed and dreſt it for a traveller that came to him, 2 Sam. xii. 6. *He ſhall reſtore the lamb fourfold.* Now the reaſon of this ſeems to be partly becauſe of the advantage and uſefulneſs of thoſe creatures above any other; and partly becauſe when they were once killed or alienated, a man could not without great trouble and difficulty make diſcovery; which hazard of not diſcovering ſeems to be accounted for in the reſtitution; but if a man did voluntarily offer reſtitution, before he was proſecuted, for any thing that was taken by violence, or unjuſtly detained from his neighbour, then he was only *to reſtore the principal, and to add a fifth part thereto, and to offer up an offering to the Lord,* and ſo *his atonement was made,* Levit. vi. 1. *&c.*

So that the higheſt proportion was a *fourth or fifth part,* and that only in the particular caſe of ſheep or oxen ſtolen away, and killed or alienated afterwards. Indeed Solomon ſpeaks of a ſevenfold reſtitution, Prov. vi. 31. where he ſaith, *If a thief be found, he ſhall reſtore ſevenfold, even all the ſubſtance of his houſe;* where ſeven is only a number of perfection, and the meaning is, he ſhall make perfect and full reſtitution according to the law, ſo far as his ſubſtance or eſtate will reach.

So that it ſeems Zacheus in reſtoring fourfold, did out-do the utmoſt ſeverity of the law; which in caſe of fraud and oppreſſion was but double, if demanded; if voluntarily offered, was the principal, and a fifth part added; but to teſtify the truth of his repentance, and his hearty ſorrow for the injuries he had done, he puniſheth

niſheth himſelf beyond what the law would have done.

I do not ſay that this example binds as to this meaſure and proportion: nay, I do not ſay we are bound to the proportions of the law; for that only concerned the nation of the Jews; but although we be free from the letter of the law, yet we are tied to the equity of it. As to the ſubſtance of the duty of reſtitution, we are bound to that by the law of nature: As to the meaſure and proportion, the equity of the judicial law in its proportions, and of Zacheus his example, ought to be conſiderable to us.

But to ſpeak more particularly concerning the meaſures and proportions of reſtitution, I ſhall lay down theſe propoſitions.

1. Where reſtitution can be made in kind, or the injury can be certainly valued, we are to reſtore the thing or the value.

2. We are bound to reſtore the thing, with the natural increaſe of it, that is, to ſatisfy for the loſs ſuſtained in the mean time, and the gain hindered.

3. Where the thing cannot be reſtored, and the value of it is not certain, we are to give reaſonable ſatisfaction, that is, according to a middle eſtimation; not the higheſt, nor the loweſt of things of the kind. The injured perſon can demand no more, and ſtrict juſtice requires no more. But it is ſafe for him that hath done the injury, rather to exceed than to fall ſhort.

4. We are at leaſt to give by way of reſtitution what the law would give; for that is generally equal, and in moſt caſes rather favourable than rigorous.

5. A man is not only bound to reſtitution for the injury which he did, but for all that directly follows upon his injurious act, though it were beyond his intention. For the firſt injury being wilful, thou art preſumed to will all that which directly followed upon it; according to that rule, *Involuntarium ortum ex voluntario cenſetur pro voluntario.* "We are preſumed to will that "which follows upon a voluntary action, though we "did not intend it." For inſtance, if a man maliciouſly and knowingly ſet fire upon another man's houſe, though he intended only an injury to that particular perſon, yet if a wind come and drive the fire to his neighbours at

at ſome diſtance, though he did not intend this, yet becauſe the firſt act was unlawful, he is liable to ſatisfy for all the direct conſequences of it. If a man wound another without any intention of killing him, and the wound prove mortal, though there was no probability that death would enſue upon it, the man is bound, becauſe the firſt act was injurious, to make reparation to his relations for the damage they ſuſtain by his death; and if they did depend ſolely upon him who died by ſuch injury, thou art bound to maintain them.

6. Becauſe thoſe who have lived in a trade and courſe of injuſtice, can hardly remember all the particular injuries they have done, ſo as to make exact ſatisfaction for them, it will not be amiſs over and beſides to give ſomething to the poor. So Zacheus does here, *Half of my eſtate I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing*, &c.

V. The perſons who are concerned in reſtitution. And here I ſhall conſider,

1. The perſons who are bound to make reſtitution.

2. The perſons to whom it is to be made.

Firſt, The perſons who are bound to make reſtitution. In general, they who have done the injury, or they who come into their ſtead, ſo as in law or equity, the injury devolves and deſcends upon them. But for the clearer ſtating of this, I ſhall lay down ſeveral propoſitions, which may ſerve to reſolve a great many caſes that may be put concerning perſons obliged to make reſtitution.

1. If the injury be done ſolely by one, without accomplices and partakers in the crime, he alone is reſponſible, and wholly bound to make ſatisfaction; I mean, he only is bound ſo long as he lives; but if the injury deſcends as a burden upon the eſtate, then he who enjoys the eſtate becomes bound to make ſatisfaction; as I ſhall ſhew afterwards.

2. If the injury was done by more, who did all equally concur to the doing of it, they are all equally bound to make ſatisfaction, and they are bound to concur together to that purpoſe; and in caſe of ſuch concurrence, every one is not bound to ſatisfy for the whole, but

but *pro rata parte*, for his ſhare; provided they do among them make full ſatisfaction.

3. If all will not concur, thoſe that are willing are bound among them to make reparation for the injury: nay, if all the reſt refuſe to join with thee in it, thou art bound *in ſolidum*, to make full reparation ſo far as thou art able; becauſe every one was guilty of the whole injury. For inſtance, if four men conſpire together to cheat a man, or to rob him, any one of theſe, if the reſt refuſe, is bound to make entire ſatisfaction; yea, though he was only partaker in the benefit; becauſe, as I ſaid before, he is guilty of the whole injury.

4. If the injury be done by more, who do unequally concur to the doing of it, he that is principal is chiefly and principally bound to make ſatisfaction: and here I do not take principal ſtrictly in the ſenſe of the law, but in the ſenſe of equity; not for him always who is the more immediate cauſe of the injury, but for him who was the greateſt cauſe, and by whoſe influence chiefly it was procured and done: but if the principal will not, the acceſſories and inſtruments are bound, at leaſt for their ſhare, and according to the proportion of the hand they had in it. But if the principal do ſatisfy in the name, and upon the account of the reſt, then the acceſſories are free from an obligation to reſtitution, and are only bound to repentance.

5. If the injury devolve upon another, by deſcending as a burden upon the eſtate, he who enjoys the eſtate is bound to make ſatisfaction. And when injuries do thus deſcend as burdens and incumberances upon eſtates, and when not, the civil laws of the place where we live muſt determine: But then, where my caſe falls within the compaſs of the law, I am bound voluntarily to ſatisfy without the compulſion of the law. For inſtance, If an eſtate fall to me charged with a debt, which hath been unjuſtly detained, I am bound voluntarily to diſcharge the debt ſo ſoon as it appears to me, before I am compelled thereto by the law.

6. As for perſonal injuries which do not lie as burdens upon the eſtate, nor do by the law deſcend upon the ſon or heir, though in ſtrict juſtice a man be not bound to make compenſation for them, for that would be

be endleſs, *& infinitum in lege repudiatur,* "No law can "take notice of that which is infinite and endleſs;" for *quæ exitum non habent, habentur pro impoſſibili us,* "Thoſe "things which have no end, to which no bounds can "be ſet, are eſteemed among things impoſſible," to which no man can be obliged; but though in ſtrict juſtice the heir be not bound to make reparation for the perſonal injuries of him whom he ſucceeds in the eſtate, yet in many caſes it is equitable, and generous, and Chriſtian, for ſuch perſons to make ſome kind of of reparation for palpable and notorious injuries. For inſtance, if I be heir to an eſtate, part of which I know certainly was injuriouſly gotten, it is not only Chriſtian, but prudent, to make ſatisfaction in the caſe to the party injured, if certainly known; if not, to give it to the poor; for by this means I may take out the moth which was bred by injuſtice in the eſtate, and rub off the ruſt, that ſticks to the gold and ſilver, which was got by oppreſſion or fraud, and ſo free the remaining part of the eſtate from that ſecret and divine Nemeſis which attends it and follows it. And for the ſame reaſon, it is very noble and Chriſtian, for the ſon and heir of an unjuſt father, to make ſome reparation for his father's injuries by reſtitution, if the thing be capable of it: if not, by doing all good offices to the injured perſons, which is ſome kind of compenſation. And in this caſe the obligation is greater, becauſe by this means a man does not only do what in him lies, to cut off the curſe, which by his father's oppreſſion and injuſtice is entailed upon the family and eſtate; but likewiſe, becauſe a ſon ought much more to be concerned for his father, than any other perſon, and to conſult the honour and reputation both of him and his own family; and the reparation which the ſon makes, is in ſome ſort the father's act, becauſe he ſucceeds him, and comes into his ſtead.

Secondly, As to the perſons to whom ſatisfaction is to be made. For the reſolution of thoſe caſes which may fall under this head, I ſhall lay down theſe propoſitions.

1. If the injured perſon can be certainly known, and be alive and extant, the ſatisfaction is to be made to him.

2. If he be not alive, or which is all one, not to be found

found or come at, ſatisfaction is to be made to his nearest relations, his wife, or children, or brothers, or other neareſt kindred. The reaſon is, becauſe ſatisfaction being due, and I having no right to keep that which I have injuriouſly gotten, if I cannot reſtore it to the party himſelf, I ought in all reaſon to place it there where I may moſt reaſonably preſume the party injured would have beſtowed his eſtate, and this part of it amongſt the reſt, had he been poſſeſſed of it. And by the ſame reaſon that I am bound thus to reſtore the part of his eſtate which I have injuriouſly taken or detained from him, I am likewiſe obliged to give ſatisfaction to the ſame perſon for any other injury; for to whomſoever I would pay a debt due to one that is deceaſed, to the ſame perſon I ought to give ſatisfaction for the injuries by which a debt is, though not formally, yet virtually contracted.

3. If the party injured be not certainly known, or have no near relations known to me, in that caſe, I think it very adviſeable to give ſo much to the poor, or to ſome charitable uſe; or if the party injured be not capable of proper ſatisfaction, as ſometimes it is a community and body of men that you have injured, in this caſe it is proper to repair the injuries to communities or bodies of men by equivalent good offices, or by ſome publick good work, which may be of common benefit and advantage. This is the fifth thing I propoſed to ſpeak to, the perſons concerned in reſtitution; both the perſons who are bound to make reſtitution, and the perſons to whom it is to be made. Of the reſt hereafter.

SER.

SERMON CLXXI.

The nature and neceſſity of reſtitution.

LUKE xix. 8, 9.

And if I have taken any thing from any man by falſe accuſation, I reſtore him fourfold. And Jeſus ſaid unto him, This day is ſalvation come to this houſe.

The ſecond ſermon on this text.

IN ſpeaking to theſe words, I propoſed to conſider,
Firſt, The nature of this duty of reſtitution.
Secondly, To ſhew the neceſſity of it.
Thirdly, To perſuade men to the diſcharge of it.

In treating of the nature of reſtitution, I have conſidered,

1. The act.
2. The extent of it.
3. The manner how it is to be performed.
4. The meaſure of it.
5. The perſons who are to make reſtitution; and the perſons to whom reſtitution is to be made. I now proceed to conſider,

VI. The time when reſtitution is to be made. In theſe caſes a man is not tied up to an inſtant, not juſt to the preſent time, unleſs the caſe be ſuch, that he can never do it, if he do not do it then. As if a man lie upon his death-bed; that is a caſe that admits of no delay, a man ſhould haſten reſtitution, as he would do the making of his will, and the diſpoſal of his eſtate; leſt if he do not do it preſently, he loſe his opportunity of doing it for ever; but ordinarily, a man is not ſo ſtrictly tied up to moments, and to the preſent time. It is ſufficient that a man be for the preſent reſolved to do it ſo ſoon as morally he can, ſo ſoon as he would do other actions of great moment and concernment. And to this purpoſe the text gives us an excellent pattern; Zacheus,

Zacheus, the ſame day he repented, took up this reſolution, and to oblige himſelf effectually to put it in execution, he publickly declares it, and before all the people offers to make reſtitution to all whom he had injured.

Therefore take heed of all unneceſſary delays in theſe matters: for though God would accept of a firm and ſincere reſolution in this caſe, if a perſon thus reſolved ſhould, before he could bring his reſolution to effect, happen to be cut off by death, or be otherwiſe rendered incapable of doing it; I ſay, though God would accept ſuch a reſolution as this, yet he will not interpret that to be a ſincere reſolution, which a man is negligent to put in practice; for every neglect of putting our reſolution in practice, is a degree of quitting and altering it; and he who did not do what he was reſolved to do, when he had an opportunity and ability of doing it, is juſtly preſumed to have let fall his reſolution.

Therefore let no man preſume upon his good intention and reſolution in this kind; for they are only acceptable to God, ſo far as they are ſincere and real; and they are only ſo far ſincere and real, as the man that makes them is ready to put them in execution, ſo ſoon as morally he can. And if thou careleſly and ſupinely trifle away the opportunities in this kind, God may likewiſe deprive thee of an opportunity for ever. For all the while thou wilfully neglecteſt to make reſtitution, thou art guilty of the injury; and there are hardly two ſins that cry louder to God for a quick and ſpeedy revenge, than injuſtice and oppreſſion, deceit and fraud. God many times takes ſuch cauſes into his more immediate cognizance. 1 Theſſ. iv. 6. *Let no man deceive or go beyond his brother in any thing: for God is the avenger of ſuch.* And David tells us, that God in a peculiar manner *abhors the blood-thirſty and deceitful man:* and threatens that he *ſhall not live out half his days.* And God by the Prophet, Mal. iii. 5. tells us, that *he will be a ſwift witneſs againſt the oppreſſors.* And if God be ſo ſwift to take vengeance upon ſuch perſons, ſurely then they are concerned to be very quick and ſpeedy in making ſatisfaction for their injuries and oppreſſions, leſt divine vengeance prevent them, and inſtead of

making reparation to men, they be called upon to make ſatisfaction to the juſtice of God; and you know who hath ſaid it, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

You therefore that have hitherto neglected this duty, delay it no longer; by all means diſcharge your conſciences of this burden, before you come to lie upon a death-bed. Then the conſciences of the worſt of men begin to work, like a ſtomach oppreſſed and ſurcharged with meat; and then they are willing for their eaſe to vomit up thoſe eſtates which they have devoured by fraud and injuſtice; then they begin to conſider the difficulty of being ſaved, and to fear that it will be impoſſible for them ever *to enter in at the ſtrait gate*, thus laden with the ſpoils of violence and deceit; even thoſe that have the hardeſt and moſt ſeared conſciences, will be touched with the ſenſe of ſuch great ſins at ſuch a time: but do not thou defer this work to that time, for theſe two reaſons:

1. Becauſe it cannot be ſo acceptable to God, to make reſtitution at ſuch a time, as when thou art in health, and in hopes of longer life. To give a man his own, when thou canſt enjoy it and uſe it no longer, this is next to detaining of it.

2. Becauſe in all probability the reſtitution which is then made will not prove ſo effectual. What thou doſt thyſelf, that thou art ſure is done: but what thou leaveſt to be done by thy executors, and chargeſt upon them, thou art not ſure will be done; ten to one but if they can find out any trick and evaſion in law, either to delay or avoid the doing of it, it ſhall either never be done, or very ſlowly. This is the ſixth thing, the time when reſtitution is to be made.

But before I leave this head, there is one caſe very proper to be conſidered, which relates to this circumſtance of time, and that is concerning injuries of a very ancient date; that is, how far this duty of reſtitution is to look backward, and whether it doth not expire by tract of time? For anſwer to this, I ſhall lay down theſe propoſitions.

At what diſtance of time ſoever the law would in the caſe make reparation and give ſatisfaction, we are undoubtedly

doubtedly bound in conſcience voluntarily to give it. I deliver this generally, becauſe, though it be poſſible ſome civil laws may be in ſome caſes unreaſonable in this matter, yet they are our beſt rule and guide; and ſpeaking generally and for the moſt part, they are as equitable as the reaſon of man could deviſe. Not that we are to tie ourſelves ſtrictly to the law, ſo as not to go farther, if reaſon and equity require; for, as Seneca ſays, *Parum eſt ad legem bonum eſſe*, "It is no great argument "of goodneſs to be juſt as good as the law requires." Therefore I think it will very well become a good man, in many caſes, rather to be better than the law, than to keep ſtrictly to it.

2. In caſes where the law hath not determined the time, we may do well to obſerve a proportion to what the law hath determined in other caſes, which come neareſt our own caſe.

3. When the injury is ſo old, that the right which the injured perſon had to reparation is reaſonably preſumed to be quitted and forſaken, then the obligation to ſatisfaction ceaſeth and expires. The reaſon is plain, becauſe every man may recede from his own right, and give it up to another; and where a man may reaſonably be preſumed to have parted with his right to another, the obligation to reſtitution ceaſeth, and the right of claiming it. Now when a thing begins, *haberi pro derelicto*, that is, when a right may reaſonably be preſumed to be quitted and forſaken, cannot in general be determined: but this muſt be eſtimated according to the importance of the right and thing in controverſy, as whether it be more or leſs conſiderable; and according to the reaſon and determination of laws about things of this nature. To illuſtrate this rule by inſtances. The Saxons, Danes, and Normans, did at ſeveral times invade and conquer this nation, and conquered it we will ſuppoſe unjuſtly, and conſequently did hold and poſſeſs that which truly belonged to others, contrary to right: and ſeveral of the poſterity of each of theſe do probably to this day hold what was then injuriouſly gotten; I ſay, in this caſe the obligation to ſatisfaction and reſtitution is long ſince expired, and the original title which thoſe who were diſpoſſeſſed had, is reaſonably preſumed to be long

ſince quitted and forſaken; and that for very wiſe reaſons in law and government; becauſe it would confound and unſettle all eſtates, if every thing, the original title whereof is nought, were to be reſtored; and it is but equal to preſume, that all mankind are ſo reaſonable, as to quit their right in ſuch caſes, rather than to cauſe endleſs diſturbances, and to have the guilt of injuſtice everlaſtingly perpetuated. And though it be a rule in civil law, that *Vitioſum initio, tractu temporis non convaleſcit*, "A title originally bad can never by time be made "juſt;" it is only true thus far, that time in itſelf doth not alter the nature of things: but conſidering the neceſſities of the world, and the infinite difficulties of retrieving an ancient right, and the inconveniencies, and diſturbances that would thereby redound to human ſociety, it is better that an injury ſhould be perpetuated, than that a great inconveniency ſhould come by endeavouring to redreſs it; ſo that although conſidering a thing ſimply in itſelf, an injury is ſo far from being leſſened or nulled, by tract of time, that it is increaſed; and the longer it continues, the greater it is; yet by accident, and in compliance with the neceſſity of things, length of time may give a right to that which was at firſt injuriouſly poſſeſſed. Judg. xi. 26. Thus Jephthah reaſons with the King of Ammon, who had made war for recovery of an ancient right, as he ſuppoſed. And though the inſtances I have given of the unjuſt conqueſt of a nation be great and publick; yet the ſame is to be determined proportionably in leſs and particular caſes. And thus I have done with the ſixth thing.

VII. and laſtly, As to the order of reſtitution. When we have injured a great many, and are not able to make reſtitution to all at once, our beſt prudence and diſcretion muſt govern us herein. Becauſe no certain rule can be given, which will reach all caſes, I will only ſay this in general, that it is reaſonable firſt to make reparation for the oldeſt and greateſt injuries; and, *cæteris paribus*, if all other conſiderations be equal, to conſider thoſe firſt who are moſt neceſſitous, and if there be any other ſpecial reaſon and obligation ariſing from the nature of the

the injury, or the circumstances of the person injured, to have regard to them. I come now, in the

Second place, to confirm the truth of the proposition, that to make restitution and satisfaction to those whom we have injured, is a proper and necessary fruit of a true repentance. And this will appear, if we consider these two things.

1. Our obligation to this duty.
2. The nature of repentance.

I. Our obligation to this duty. Upon the same account that we are obliged to repentance, we are obliged to restitution; and both these obligations arise from natural equity and justice. All sin is an injury done; and though repentance be not strictly satisfaction, yet it is the best we can make; and he is unjust, who having done an injury, does not make the best reparation he can. But now there are some sins, in which, besides the injury that is done to God by them, upon the general account, as they are sins and violations of his laws, there is likewise a particular injury done to men; and such are all those, the effect whereof redounds to the prejudice of other men: such are fraud and oppression, and all other sins whereby others are injured. So that in these kinds of sins, there are two things considerable, the irregularity and viciousness of the act, and the evil effects of it upon other men: the former respects the law, and calls for sorrow and repentance for our violation of it; the latter respects the person that is injured, and calls for satisfaction and restitution. So that our obligation to restitution is founded in the immutable and indispensible law of nature, which is, *To do that to another, which we would have another do to us.* We would have no man be injurious to us, or if he hath been so, we would have him make satisfaction and reparation to us of the injury he hath done; and we take it grievously from him, if he do not. Now nothing is more just and equitable, than that we should do that to others which we in like case would expect from them: for the very same obligation that lies upon others towards us, does lie upon us in regard to others.

II. This will yet farther appear, if we consider the nature of repentance, which is to be sorry for what we

have done, and not to do the like for the future. Now if thou be ſorry for what thou haſt done, thou wiſheſt with all thy heart thou hadſt not done it; and if thou doſt ſo, thou wilt undo, as much as in thee lieth, what thou haſt done. Now the beſt way to undo an injury, is to make reparation for it; and till we do this, we continue in the ſin. For if it was a ſin, to do the injury at firſt, it is the ſame continued, not to make ſatisfaction; and we do not ceaſe to commit the ſin, ſo long as we detain that which is another's right. Nothing but reſtitution can ſtop the progreſs of ſin: for if it be a ſin, to take that which is another man's from him by fraud and violence, it is the ſame continued and virtually repeated, to detain and keep it from him; and nothing more contrary to repentance, than to continue in the ſin thou pretendeſt to repent of. For how art thou ſorry for doing of it, if thou continueſt to do it, if thou wilt go on to do it, and do it again? How doſt thou hate thy ſin, if thou enjoy the benefit and reap the advantage of it? If thou doeſt this, it is an argument thou loveſt thy ſin ſtill: for thou didſt never love it for itſelf, but for the profit of it; and ſo long as thou retaineſt that, thou canſt not be quit of the ſin. Thou holdeſt faſt thy ſin ſo long as thou refuſeſt to make ſatisfaction for it; and repentance without reſtitution differs as much from true repentance, as continuance in ſin does from the forſaking of it. *Si res aliena non redditur, non agitur pœnitentia, ſed fingitur;* ſo St. Auguſtin; "if we do not reſtore that which "we have injuriouſly detained from another, our repen- "tance is not real, but feigned and hypocritical," and will not be effectual to the obtaining of our pardon. It is a very common, but a true and terrible ſaying, *Non dimittitur peccatum, niſi reſtituatur ablatum,* "No "remiſſion without reſtitution." If we will inherit the profit and advantage of ſin, we cannot think it unreaſonable or unjuſt that we ſhould inherit the puniſhment of it.

When the ſcripture ſpeaks of repentance, it frequently mentions reſtitution as a proper fruit and effect of it, and as a neceſſary and indiſpenſible condition of pardon and life. Ezek. xxxiii. 14, 15, 16. *Again, when I ſay unto the wicked, thou ſhalt ſurely die: if he turn from his*

his ſin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked reſtore the pledge, give again that he hath robbed, &c. As if he had ſaid, when I denounce death and deſtruction to the wicked, there is but this one way to eſcape it, and that is by repentance; but then take notice what a repentance it is that will avail to this end; it is not a bewailing ourſelves, and lamenting over our ſins, but a forſaking of them and returning to our duty; *If we turn from our ſin, and do that which is lawful and right.* For inſtance, if he have been guilty of injuſtice and oppreſſion; if he leave his courſe, and deal juſtly and righteouſly with his neighbour, and not only ſo, but he alſo make reſtitution for the injury he hath done, and reſtore what he hath unjuſtly detained and taken away; *If he reſtore the pledge, and give again that he hath robbed,* and do no injuſtice for the future, but *walk in the ſtatutes of life without committing iniquity;* upon theſe terms and no other *he ſhall live, he ſhall not die.* Yea, the very light of nature could ſuggeſt thus much to the people of Nineveh, that there was no hope, without this fruit of repentance, of appeaſing God's wrath. Therefore the King and the princes, after all the external ſolemnity of *faſting, and ſackloth, and crying mightily,* they decree that *every one ſhould turn from the evil of his ways, and from the violence that was in their hands, ut rapina manus vacuefaciat, & rapta reſtituat, ſine quo non eſt vera pœnitentia;* ſo Grot. upon the place, "That he "empty his hands of the ſpoils of rapine and oppreſ-"ſion," that is, "that he make reſtitution, without "which there can be no repentance:" And upon their doing this, it is ſaid, that *God ſpared them,* ver. 10. *And God ſaw their works, that they turned from their evil ways.* It is not ſaid, that he ſaw their faſting and ſackcloth, but *he ſaw their works,* the real fruits and effects of their repentance; and upon this it was that *God repented of the evil he ſaid he would do to them, and he did it not.* And elſewhere we find that God ſpeaks with great indignation of the moſt ſolemn repentance which is not accompanied with this fruit, Iſa. lviii. 3. 4. 5. 6. The people tell God how *they had faſted and afflicted their ſoul, and made their voice to be heard on high:* but God deſpiſeth all this, becauſe it was not accompanied with

with the fruit of repentance. *Is it ſuch a faſt as I have choſen?* &c. There is ſo much of natural juſtice and equity in reſtitution, and it is ſo proper a fruit of repentance, that, as Grotius obſerves, it is not only the doctrine of the Jews and Chriſtians, but of Heathens and Mahometans, that the repentance which does not produce this fruit is feigned, and will never avail with God for pardon and mercy. Thus much for confirmation of this doctrine.

The *Third* and *laſt* thing I propoſed was to perſuade to the practice of this duty; and this may ſerve by way of application of the doctrine of reſtitution. The uſe we ſhall make of it is,

Firſt, To perſuade men to the practice of this difficult duty. I doubt not but the arguments I have uſed are ſufficient to convince us of the equity and neceſſity of reſtitution; but what arguments ſhall I uſe to perſuade to the practice and exerciſe of it? When we preſs men to their duty, though we have ſome advantages on our ſide, yet we have alſo great diſadvantages. We have this advantage, that we have the reaſon and conſciences of men on our ſide: but then we have this diſadvantage, that we have to contend either with the luſts or intereſts of men, or both: now, that theſe are uſually more powerful, is evident in that the luſts and intereſts of men do ſo frequently biaſs and draw them to do things contrary to reaſon and conſcience. When we perſuade men to be juſt, and to make reſtitution to thoſe whom they have injured; it is true we have not to contend with the luſts of men, with any corrupt and vitious inclination of nature. There are ſome ſins that have their riſe from mens natural tempers, as paſſion and luſt, and thoſe ſenſual vices that abound in the world: but there is nothing in any man's natural temper and diſpoſition that inclines him to be unjuſt; no man's complexion doth particularly diſpoſe him to lie or ſteal, to defraud his neighbour, or detain his right from him; it is only the intereſts of men that prompt them to theſe things; and they are upon this account the more inexcuſable, becauſe no man is inclined to theſe ſins from particular temper and conſtitution: ſo that an unjuſt man is in ordinary caſes and circumſtances a greater ſinner, than a drunk-

drunkard or a lustful man, because no man can pretend to be hurried away by the strong propension and inclination of his nature to cheat his brother. But although, when we persuade men to be just, we have not the lusts of men to contend withal, yet we have another powerful adversary, and that is the interests of men, which is one of the chief *rulers and governors of this world;* so that when we press men to restitution, we touch them in their interest, which is a very touchy and tender thing: when we tell them, that, without restitution, no man can repent and be saved, they think this to be *a very hard saying*, and they know not *how to bear it.*

But certainly it hath all the reason and equity in the world on its side. If it be so hard for them to restore that which is another man's, is it not much harder for him whom thou hast injured, to lose that which is his own? Make it thine own case; wouldest thou not think it much harder to have thy right detained from thee by another, than for another to part with that which is not his own?

But I am sensible how little it is, that reason will sway with men against their interest; therefore the best argument that I can use, will be to satisfy men, that upon a true and just account, it is not so much their interest to retain what they have unjustly got, as to make restitution.

And this I shall do, by shewing men, that to make restitution is their true interest, both in respect to themselves, and of their posterity.

1. In respect to themselves. It is better both in respect of our present condition in this world, and of our future state.

1. In respect of our present condition in this world, and that both in respect of our outward estate, and our inward peace and tranquility.

1st, In respect of our outward estate. If we have any belief of the providence of God, that his blessing can prosper an estate, and his curse consume it and make it moulder away, we cannot but judge it highly our interest, to clear our estates of injustice by restitution; and by this means to free them from God's curse. For if any of our estate be unjustly gotten, it is enough to draw down God's curse upon all that we have; it is like a moth in our estate, which will insensibly consume it;

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it is like a ſecret poiſon, which will diffuſe itſelf through the whole; like a little land *in capite*, which brings the whole eſtate into wardſhip.

Hear how God threatens to blaſt eſtates unjuſtly gotten, Job xx. 12. *&c.* concluding with theſe words, *This is the portion of a wicked man*, that is, of an unjuſt man. Jer. xvii. 11. *As a partridge ſitteth on eggs, and hatches them not, ſo he that getteth riches, and not by right, ſhall leave them in the midſt of his days, and at his end ſhall be a fool.* Men many times live to ſee the folly of their injuſtice and oppreſſion, and their eſtates wither away before their eyes; and, by the juſt revenge of God, they are deprived of them in the midſt of their days. So that the beſt way to fix an eſtate, and to ſecure it to ourſelves, is by reſtitution to free it from God's curſe; and when we have done that, how much ſoever we may diminiſh our eſtate by it, we may look upon ourſelves, as having a better eſtate than we had; better, becauſe we have God's bleſſing with that which remains. If we believe the bible, we cannot doubt of this. The Spirit of God tells us this from the obſervation of the wiſeſt men, Pſal. xxxvii. 16. *A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.* Prov. xvi. 8. *Better is a little with righteouſneſs, than great revenues without right.*

2*dly*, In reſpect of inward peace and tranquility, it is highly our intereſt to make reſtitution. No man can enjoy an eſtate that does not enjoy himſelf; and nothing puts a man more out of the poſſeſſion of himſelf, than an unquiet conſcience; and there are no kind of ſins lie heavier upon a man's conſcience, than thoſe of injuſtice; becauſe they are committed againſt the cleareſt natural light, and there is the leaſt natural temptation to them. They have theſe two great aggravations, that they are ſins moſt againſt knowledge, and have moſt of will in them. There needs no revelation to convince men of ſins of injuſtice and oppreſſion; every man hath thoſe principles born with him, which will ſufficiently acquaint him, that he ought not to be injurious to another. There is nothing that relates to our duty, that a man can know with greater certainty than this, that injuſtice is a ſin. And as it is a ſin moſt againſt knowledge, ſo it hath moſt of will in it. Men are hurried away

way to other sins by the strong and violent propensions of their nature: but no man is inclined, by his temper and constitution, to fraud and oppression: and the less there is of nature in any sin, there is the less of necessity, and consequently it is the more voluntary. Now, the greater the aggravations of any sin are, the greater is the guilt; and the greater the guilt is, the more unquiet our consciences will be: so that if thou have any regard to the interest of thine own peace, if that be considerable to thee, which to wise men is the most valuable thing in the world, do not for a little wealth continue in those sins, which will create perpetual disturbance to thee, and imbitter all the pleasures of thy life. Hear how Job describes the condition of the wicked oppressors in the place before cited, Job xx. 12. &c. *He shall not rejoice in them, because he hath oppressed; because he hath violently taken away a house which he builded not, surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly:* that is, he shall have no inward peace and contentment in the midst of all his outward enjoyments; but his ill-gotten estate will work in his conscience, and gripe him, as if a man had taken down poison into his belly.

2. But chiefly in respect of our future estate in another world, it is every man's interest to make restitution. Without repentance we are ruined for ever, and without restitution no repentance. *No unrighteous man hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ.* If thou continue in thy fraud and oppression, and carry these sins with thee into another world, they will hang as a millstone about thy neck, and sink thee into eternal ruin. He that wrongs his brother hates him, and *he that hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him,* 1 John iii. 15. Rom. i. 18. *The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* So that if it be mens interest to escape the wrath of God, it concerns us to make reparation for those injuries which will expose us to it. That is a dreadful text, James v. 1, 2, 3, 4. *Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth eaten: Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat*

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eat your fleſh as it were fire : ye have heaped treaſure together for the laſt days. Behold! the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Do not, by *detaining the treaſures of wickedneſs, treaſure up to yourſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath.* Do not make yourſelves *miſerable for ever*, that you may be *rich for a little while.* Do not, for a little *ſilver and gold*, forfeit *the eternal inheritance*, which was *not purchaſed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of the Son of God;* and if this conſideration, which is the weightieſt in the world, will not prevail with men, I can only ſay with the Angel, Rev. xxii. 11. *He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill*, let him continue in his injuſtice at his peril, and remember what is added at the 12th verſe, *Behold! I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work ſhall be.*

II. In reſpect of our children and poſterity, it is greatly our intereſt to make reſtitution. God many times ſuffers an eſtate got by oppreſſion to proſper for a little while: but there is a curſe attends it, which deſcends upon the eſtate like an incumbrance; and parents, many times, when they think they entail an eſtate, they entail poverty upon their children. Job xx. 10. ſpeaking of the children of the oppreſſor, he ſaith, *His children ſhall ſeek to pleaſe the poor, and his hands ſhall reſtore their goods.* And Job xxi. 19. *God layeth up his iniquity for his children.* Thou layeſt up riches for thy children; and *God lays up thine iniquity* and injuſtice *for them*, the curſe that belongs to them. Hab. ii. 9, 10, 11. *Wo to him that coveteth an evil covetouſneſs, or gaineth an evil gain to his houſe*, &c. Thou thoughteſt to raiſe thy family by thoſe ways; but *thou haſt conſulted ſhame to thy houſe.* No ſuch effectual way to ruin thy family, as injuſtice and oppreſſion. As then you would not tranſmit a curſe to your children, and devolve miſery upon your family, free your eſtates from the burden and weight of what is other mens, leſt by God's juſt judgment and ſecret providence, that little which you injuriouſly detain from others, carry away your whole eſtate to them, and their family. God's providence

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many times makes abundant reſtitution, when we will not.

Having now endeavoured to ſatisfy men, that it is their trueſt intereſt, to make reſtitution for the injuries they have done to others, it remains only that I ſhould anſwer an objection or two, which men are apt to make againſt this duty.

1. Men ſay they are aſhamed to do it. *Anſ.* It is not matter of ſhame, but of praiſe and commendation. But it may be thou wilt ſay, it is matter of ſhame to have injured another; and this is the way to lay open thy ſhame. Indeed, if the injury were publick, the reſtitution ought to be ſo too, as the only way to take off the ſhame of the injury. For thy reſtitution doth not in this caſe publiſh thy ſhame, but thy honeſty: But if the injury was private, thou mayeſt preſerve thy own credit, by concealing thyſelf; and provided thou do the thing effectually, thou mayeſt be as prudent, as to the manner of doing it, as thou pleaſeſt.

2. Another objection is the prejudice it will be to mens eſtates. But this I have anſwered already, by ſhewing that it is more their intereſt to make reſtitution, than to continue in the ſin. I ſhall only add, that as our Saviour reaſons in another caſe, *It is profitable for thee, that one of thy members ſhould periſh, rather than that thy whole body ſhould be caſt into hell.* It is true likewiſe here, it is profitable for thee, that thou ſhouldſt go a beggar to heaven, rather than that thou ſhouldſt go to hell, laden with the ſpoils and guilt of rapine and injuſtice.

3. The laſt objection that I ſhall mention, is diſability to make reſtitution. This indeed is ſomething; where nothing is to be had, every man muſt loſe his right: but then remember, that there muſt be a hearty repentance for the ſin; and thy ſorrow muſt be ſo much greater, by how much thy ability to make reſtitution is leſs; and there muſt be a willing mind, a firm purpoſe, and reſolution of doing it, when God ſhall enable thee, and diligent endeavours to that purpoſe. Under the law, thoſe who were not able to make reſtitution were ſold for ſix years, if their ſervice did not make reparation in leſs time. It is true, indeed, the moderation of the goſpel

doth not ſuffer Chriſtians to deal ſo hardly with another: But if the gospel remit of this rigour, and do not allow Chriſtians to challenge it, we ſhould voluntarily do in effect that which they were forced to, that is, we ſhould uſe our beſt endeavours and diligence to put ourſelves into a condition of making ſatisfaction; and we ſhould not look upon any thing beyond the neceſſary conveniencies of life as our own, till we have done it; unleſs the party injured will recede from his right, in whole or in part. For tho' the impoſſibility of the thing do diſcharge us for the preſent, yet the obligation ſtill lies upon us to do it, ſo ſoon as we are able.

And here it will be proper to conſider the caſe of thoſe who have compounded with their creditors for a ſmall part, whether they be in conſcience and equity releaſed from the whole debt. I am loth to lay unneceſſary burdens upon mens conſciences; therefore I am very tender in reſolving ſuch caſes: But I ought to have a more tender care of the ſouls of men, than of their eſtates: therefore, to deal plainly, and to diſcharge my conſcience in this matter, I think ſuch perſons do, notwithſtanding the compoſition, ſtand obliged in equity and conſcience for the whole debt, and are bound to diſcharge it ſo ſoon as they can with tolerable convenience. My reaſon is, becauſe, though they be diſcharged in law, yet the law does not intend to take off the obligation of conſcience or equity, which they are under, but leaves that as it found it. Thus the caſe ſtands; men who are in a way of trade, are engaged by the neceſſities of their calling, to venture a great part of their eſtate in other mens hands, and by this means become liable many times to be undone without their own fault; therefore it is uſual, when any man in a way of trade becomes diſabled, for the creditors to make ſuch a compoſition with him as his eſtate will bear; and upon this compoſition to give him a full diſcharge, ſo as that they cannot afterwards, by law, require of him the remainder of their debt. Now, tho' this be a favour to the debtor, yet it is principally intended for the benefit of the creditor; becauſe it being his act, it is to be preſumed, that he intended it as much as may be, for his own advantage; and ſo it is, for the creditor has as much ſatisfaction at

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present as can be had, and the debtor is hereby left in a capacity of recovering himself again by his industry and diligence, which could not be, if he were not fully discharged; for if he were still liable for the rest, he would continually be obnoxious to imprisonment, which would render him incapable of following his calling; or if he were at liberty, he could have no credit to enable him to do any thing in his calling; for who would trust a man with any thing, who is liable every moment to have it taken from him? So that the reason of this plenary discharge is this, that men who are otherwise hopeful, and in a fair probability of recovering themselves, may not be rendered incapable of getting an estate afterwards, whereby they may support themselves, and discharge their debts. Now this discharge being given in order to these ends, it cannot be imagined that it should be intended to defeat them; but it is in all reason to be supposed, that the creditors did not intend to take of the obligation of equity and conscience, only to put the man into a condition of doing something towards the enabling him to discharge his debt. So that, unless it were expressed at the composition, that the creditor would never expect more from him, upon any account of equity and conscience, but did freely forgive him the rest, the contrary whereof is usually done; I say, unless it were thus expressed, there is no reason why the creditor's favour in making a composition should be abused to his prejudice; and why a legal discharge, given him on purpose, for this reason, among others, to put him into a capacity of recovering himself, and giving full satisfaction, should be so interpreted, as to extinguish the equitable right of the creditor to the remainder of his debt.

The *Second* use of this doctrine of restitution should be by way of prevention, that men would take heed of being injurious, and so take away the occasion of restitution, and free themselves from the temptation of not performing so difficult and so unwelcome a duty. It is much easier of the two, not to cozen or oppress thy neighbour, than, after thou hast done it, it will be to bring thyself to make restitution: therefore we shoul

be very careful, not to be injurious to any one in any kind; neither immediately by ourselves, nor by aiding and assisting others, by our power and interest, or skill in the law, or by any other way, to do injustice.

SERMON CLXXII.

The usefulness of consideration, in order to repentance.

DEUT. xxxii. 29.

O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

THIS chapter is called Moses his song, in which he briefly recounts the various providences of God toward the people of Israel, and the froward carriage of that people towards him.

First, He puts them in mind how God had chosen them for his peculiar people, and had, by a signal care and providence, conducted them all that tedious journey, for the space of forty years in the wilderness, 'till he had brought them to the promised land, which they had now begun to take possession of.

And then he foretells, how they would behave themselves after all this mercy and kindness God had shewn to them, ver. 15. *Jesurun waxed fat, and kicked, and forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation.* Upon this he tells them, God would be extremely displeased with them, and would multiply his judgments upon them, ver 19, 20. *When the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters: And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.* And ver. 23. *I will heap mischief upon them, I will spend mine arrows upon them.* And then he

he enumerates the particular judgments which he would ſend upon them: nay, he declares he would have utterly conſumed them, but that he was loth to give occaſion of ſo much triumph to his and their enemies, ver. 26, 27. *I ſaid, I would ſcatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to ceaſe from among men; were it not, that I feared the wrath of the enemy, leſt their adverſaries ſhould behave themſelves ſtrangely, and leſt they ſhould ſay, our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this.* And he adds the reaſon of all this ſeverity; becauſe they were ſo very ſtupid and inconſiderate, ver. 28. *For they are a nation void of counſel, neither is there any underſtanding in them.*

And, in the concluſion of all, he repreſents God, as it were, breaking out into this vehement and affectionate wiſh, *O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end!*

O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this! What is that? This may refer to all that went before. O that they were wiſe to conſider what God hath done for them, and what they had done againſt him, and what he will do againſt them, if they continue or renew their former provocations! O that they were but duly apprehenſive of this, and would lay it ſeriouſly to heart!

But from what follows, it ſeems more particularly to refer to thoſe particular judgments which God had threatened them withal, and which would certainly befal them, if they ſtill continued in their diſobedience. *O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end!* That is, the ſad conſequences of theſe their provocations, that by the conſideration thereof, they might prevent all thoſe evils and calamities, by turning from thoſe ſins which would unavoidably bring them upon them.

From the words thus explained, I ſhall obſerve theſe four things.

1. That God doth really and heartily deſire the happineſs of men, and to prevent their miſery and ruin. For the very deſign of theſe words is to expreſs this to us, and it is done in a very vehement, and, as I may ſay, paſſionate manner.

2. That it is a great point of wisdom, to consider seriously the last issue and consequence of our actions, whither they tend, and what will follow upon them. And therefore wisdom is here described by *the consideration of our latter end.*

3. That this is an excellent means to prevent that misery, which will otherwise befal us. And this is necessarily implied in this wish, that if they would but consider these things, they might be prevented.

4. That the want of this consideration is the great cause of mens ruin. And this is likewise implied in the words, that one great reason of mens ruin is, because they are not so wise, as to consider the fatal issue and consequence of a sinful course. I shall speak briefly to each of these.

I. That God doth really and heartily desire the happiness of men, and to prevent their misery and ruin.

To express this to us, God doth put on the vehemency of a human passion; *O that they were wise!* &c. The laws of God are a clear evidence of this; because the observance of them tends to our happiness. There is no good Prince makes laws with any other design, than to promote the publick welfare and happiness of his people: And with much more reason may we imagine, that the infinite good God does by all his laws design the happiness of his creatures. And the exhortations of scripture, by which he enforceth his laws, are yet a greater evidence how earnestly he desires the happiness of his creatures. For it shews that he is concerned for us, when he useth so many arguments to persuade us to our duty, and when he expostulates so vehemently with us for our neglect of it, saying to sinners, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel? Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life,* says our blessed Saviour, with great trouble to see men so obstinately set against their own happiness; and again, *How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* And to satisfy us yet further, that it is his real desire, by our obedience to his laws, to prevent our ruin, God does frequently in scripture put on the passions of men, and use all sorts of vehement expressions to this purpose. Deut. v. 29. *O that*

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there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! And Psal. lxxxi. 13. *O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.* Jer. xiii. 27. *O Israel! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?* And to name but one text more, when our blessed Saviour wept over Jerusalem, how passionately does he wish that *she had known in that her day, the things that belonged to her peace!*

And if after all this, we can doubt whether the faithful God means as he says, he hath, for our farther assurance, and to put the matter out of all doubt, confirmed his word by an oath. Ezek. xxxiii 11. *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* So that if words can be any declaration of a hearty and sincere desire, we have no reason to doubt, but that God does really desire the happiness of men, and would gladly prevent their ruin and destruction.

If any now ask, Why then are not all men happy? why do they not escape ruin and destruction? And, particularly, why the people of Israel, for whom God here makes this wish, did not escape those judgments which were threatened? The Prophet shall answer for me, Hos. xiii. 9. *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself.* And David, Psal. lxxxi. 11. *My people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would none of me.* And our blessed Saviour, Matth. xxiii. 37. *How often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!* And John v. 40. *Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.* You see what account the scripture plainly gives of this matter; it rests upon the wills of men, and God hath not thought fit to force happiness upon men, and to make them wise and good whether they will or no. He presents men with such motives, and offers such arguments to their consideration, as are fit to prevail with reasonable men, and is ready to afford them all necessary assist-

sistance, if they be not wanting to themselves; but if they will not *be wise, and consider*, if they will stand out against all the arguments that God can offer; if they will *receive the grace of God in vain, and resist his blessed Spirit, and reject the counsel of God against themselves*, God hath not in this case engaged himself to provide any remedy against the obstinacy and perverseness of men, but *their destruction is of themselves, and their blood shall be upon their own heads.* And there is no nicety and intricacy in this matter; but if men will consider scripture and reason impartially, they will find this to be the plain resolution of the case.

So that no man hath reason either to charge his fault, or his punishment upon God; he is *free from the blood of all men;* he sincerely desires our happiness, but we wilfully ruin ourselves: and when he tells us, that *he desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness, and live; that he would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth; that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance;* he plainly means, as he says, and doth not speak to us with any reserve, or dark distinction between his secret and revealed will; he does not decree one thing, and declare another.

And if this be so, no man hath reason to be discouraged from attempting and endeavouring his own happiness, upon a jealousy and surmise that God hath, by any fatal decree, put a bar to it from all eternity: for if he had so absolutely resolved to make the greatest part of mankind miserable, without any respect to their actions in this world, he would never have said, that *he desires that all should be saved;* he would not have exhorted all men *to work out their own salvation:* had he taken up any such resolution, he would have declared it to all the world; for he hath power enough in his hand *to do what he pleaseth, and none can resist his will;* so that he did not need to have dissembled the matter, and to have pretended a desire to save men, when he was resolved to ruin them.

This is the first, that God doth really and heartily desire the happiness of men, and to prevent their misery and ruin. I proceed to the

II. That

II. That it is a great part of wisdom, to consider seriously the last issue and consequence of our actions, and whither the course of life which we lead does tend, and what will follow upon it. And therefore wisdom is here explained by consideration; *O that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end!* that is, what will befal them hereafter, what will be the issue and consequence of all the sins and provocations which they are guilty of.

And this is a principal point and property of wisdom, to look forward, and not only to consider the present pleasure and advantage of any action, but the future consequence of it; and there is no greater argument of an imprudent man, than to gratify himself for the present in the doing of a thing, which will turn to his greater prejudice afterwards; especially if the future inconvenience be great and intolerable, as it is in the case we are speaking of. For eternal happiness or misery depends upon the actions of this present life: and, according as we behave ourselves in this world, it will go well or ill with us for ever: so that this is a matter of vast importance, and deserves our most serious thoughts; and, in matters of mighty consequence, a wise man will take all things into consideration, and look before him as far as he can. And, indeed, this is the reason why things of great moment are said to be things of consequence, because great things depend and are likely to follow upon them: and then surely that is the greatest concernment, upon which not only the happiness of this present life, but our happiness to all eternity does depend; and if the good and bad actions of this life be of that consequence to us, it is fit every man should consider what he does, and whither the course of life he is engaged, or about to engage in, will lead him at last. For this is true wisdom, to look to the end of things, and to think seriously before-hand, what is likely to be the event of such an action, of such a course of life. If we serve God faithfully, and do his will, what will be the consequence of that to us in this world and the other: and, on the other hand, if we live wickedly, and allow ourselves in any unlawful and vitious practice, what will be the end of that course.

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And to any man that consults the law of his own nature, or the will of God revealed in scripture, nothing can be plainer than what will be the end of these several ways. God hath plainly told us, and our own consciences will tell us the same, that *if we do well, we shall be accepted* of God, and rewarded by him. but if we do ill, *the end of these things is death; that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, will be upon every soul of man that doth evil; but honour, and glory, and peace to every man that doth good, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to the gospel.*

So that God hath given us a plain prospect of the different issues of a virtuous and a wicked life, and there wants nothing but consideration to make us to attend to these things, and to lay them seriously to heart. For while men are inconsiderate, they go on stupidly in an evil way, and are not sensible of the danger of their present course, because they do not attend to the consequence of it: but when their eyes are once opened by consideration, they cannot but be sadly apprehensive of the mischief they are running themselves upon. If men would take but a serious and impartial view of their lives and actions; if they would consider the tendency of a sinful course, and whither it will bring them at last; if the vitious and dissolute man would but look about him, and consider how many have been ruined in that very way that he is in, how many lie *slain and wounded in it; that it is the way to hell, and leads down to the chambers of death;* the serious thought of this could not but check him in his course, and make him resolve upon a better life. If men were wise, they would consider the consequence of their actions, and upon consideration would resolve upon that which they are convinced is best. I proceed to the

III. Thing I propounded, which was, that consideration of the consequence of our actions, is an excellent means to prevent the mischiefs which otherwise we should run into. And this is necessarily implied in the wish here in the text, that if we would but consider these things, they might be prevented. For how can any man, who hath any love or regard for himself, any tenderness

dernels for his own intereſt and happine s, ſee hell and deſtruction before him, which, if he hold on in his evil courſe, will certainly ſwallow him up, and yet venture to go on in his ſins? Can any man that plainly beholds miſery haſtening towards him, *like an armed man, and deſtruction coming upon him, as a whirlwind*, think himſelf unconcerned to prevent it, and flie from it? The moſt dull and ſtupid creatures will ſtart back upon the ſight of preſent danger. Balaam's aſs, when ſhe ſaw the angel of the Lord ſtanding in the way, with his ſword drawn, ready to ſmite her, ſtarts aſide, and could not be urged on. Now, God hath given us, not only ſenſe to apprehend a preſent evil, but reaſon and conſideration to look before us, and to di cover dangers at a diſtance, to apprehend them as certainly, and with as clear a conviction of the reality of them, as if they threatened us the next moment: and will any conſiderate man, who hath calculated the dangerous events of ſin, and the dreadful effects of God's wrath upon ſinners, go on to *provoke the Lord to jealouſy, as if he were ſtronger than he?* It is not to be imagined, but that if men would ſeriouſly conſider what ſin is, and what ſhall be the ſad portion of ſinners hereafter, they would reſolve upon a better courſe. Would any man live in the luſts of the fleſh, and of intemperance, or out of covetouſneſs defraud or oppreſs his neighbour, did he ſeriouſly conſider, that *God is the avenger of ſuch*, and that *becauſe of theſe things the wrath of God comes upon the children of diſobedience?*

I ſhould have great hopes of mens repentance and reformation, if they could but once be brought to conſideration: for in moſt men it is not ſo much a poſitive diſbelief of the truth, as inadvertency, and want of conſideration, that makes them to go on ſo ſecurely in a ſinful courſe. Would but men conſider what ſin is, and what will be the fearful conſequence of it, probably in this world, but moſt certainly in the other, they could not chuſe but fly from it as the greateſt evil in the world.

And to ſhew what power and influence conſideration will probably have to bring men to repentance, and a change of their lives, I remember to have ſomewhere

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met with a very remarkable story, of one that had a son that took bad courses, and would not be reclaimed by all the good counsel his father could give him; at last coming to his father, who lay upon his death-bed, to beg his blessing, his father instead of upbraiding him with his bad life, and undutiful carriage toward him, spake kindly to him, and told him he had but one thing to desire of him, that every day he would retire and spend one quarter of an hour alone by himself; which he promised his father faithfully to do, and make it good. After a while it grew tedious to him, to spend even so little time in such bad and uneasy company, and he began to bethink himself, for what reason his father should so earnestly desire of him to do so odd a thing for his sake, and his mind presently suggested to him, that it was to enforce him to consideration; wisely judging, that if by any means he could but bring him to that, he would soon reform his life, and become a new man, and the thing had its desired effect; for, after a very little consideration, he took up a firm resolution to change the course of his life, and was true to it all his days. I cannot answer for the truth of the story, but for the moral of it I will; namely, that consideration is one of the best and most likely means in the world, to bring a bad man to a better mind. now come to the

IV. And last particular, namely, that the want of this consideration is one of the greatest causes of mens ruin. And this likewise is implied in the text; and the reason why God does so vehemently desire that men would be wise and consider, is, because so many are ruined and undone for want of it. This is the desperate folly of mankind, that they seldom think seriously of the consequence of their actions, and least of all such as are of greatest concernment to them, and have the chief influence upon their eternal condition. They do not consider what mischief and inconvenience a wicked life may plunge them into in this world, what trouble and disturbance it may give them when they come to die; what horror and confusion it may fill them withal, when they are leaving this world, and passing into eternity; and what intolerable misery and torment it may bring upon them to all eternity. Did men ponder

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and lay to heart death and judgment, heaven and hell; and would they but let their thoughts dwell upon these things, it is not credible that the generality of men could lead such prophane and impious, such lewd and dissolute, such secure and careless lives as they do.

Would but a man frequently entertain his mind with such thoughts as these; I must shortly die, and leave this world, and then all the pleasures and enjoyments of it will be to me, as if they had never been, only that the remembrance of them, and the ill use I have made of them, will be very bitter and grievous to me; after all, death will transmit me out of this world, into a quite different state and scene of things, into the presence of that great and terrible, that inflexible and impartial Judge, who will *render to every man according to his works*; and then all the evils which I have done in this life, will rise up in judgment against me, and fill me with everlasting confusion, in that great assembly of men and angels, will banish me from the presence of God, and all the happiness which flows from it, and procure a dreadful sentence of unspeakable misery and torment to be past upon me, which I can never get reversed, nor yet ever be able to stand under the weight of it. If men would but enter into the serious consideration of these things, and pursue these thoughts to some issue and conclusion, they would take up other resolutions; and I verily believe, that the want of this hath ruined more than even infidelity itself. And this I take to be the meaning of that question in the Psalmist, *have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* that is, no consideration; intimating, that if they had, they would do better.

All that now remains, is to persuade men to apply their hearts to this piece of wisdom, to look before them, and to think seriously of the consequence of their actions, what will be the final issue of that course of life they are engaged in; and if they continue in it, what will become of them hereafter, what will become of them for ever.

And here I might apply this text, as God here does to the people of Israel, to the publick condition of the

nation, which is not so very unlike to that of the people of Israel; for God seems to have chosen this nation for his more peculiar people, and hath exercised a very particular providence towards us, in conducting us through that wilderness of confusion, in which we have been wandering for the space of above forty years; and when things were come to the last extremity, and we seemed to stand upon the very brink of ruin, then, as it is said of the people of Israel, ver. 36. of this chapter, *God repented himself for his servants, when he saw their power was gone;* that is, that they were utterly unable to help themselves, and to work their own deliverance. And it may be said of us, as Moses does of that people, chap. xxxiii. 29. *Happy art thou, O Israel, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency!* Never did any nation struggle with, and get through so many and so great difficulties, as we have several times done.

And I fear we have behaved ourselves towards God, not much better than the people of Israel did, but, like Jesurun, after many deliverances and great mercies, *have waxed fat, and kicked, have forsaken the God that made us, and lightly esteemed the rock of our salvation;* by which we have provoked the Lord to jealousy, and have as it were, forced him to multiply his judgments, and to spend his arrows upon us, *and to hide his face from us, to see what our end will be:* so that we have reason to fear, that God would have brought utter ruin and destruction upon us, and *scattered us into corners, and made the remembrance of us to have ceased from among men, had he not feared the wrath of the enemy, and lest the adversaries should have behaved themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this;* that is, lest they should ascribe this just vengeance of God upon a sinful and unthankful nation, to the goodness and righteousness of their own cause, and to the favour and assistance of the idols and false Gods whom they worshiped, to the patronage and aid of the virgin Mary and the saints; to whom, contrary to the will and command of the true God, they had offered up so many prayers and vows, and paid the greatest part of their religious worship. *But the Lord hath shewn himself*

ſelf greater than all Gods, and in the things wherein they dealt proudly, that he is above them: for our rock is not as their rock, even our enemies themſelves being Judges.

And we have been too like the people of Iſrael in other reſpects alſo, ſo fickle and inconſtant, that after great deliverances we are apt preſently to murmur and be diſcontented, to grow ſick of our own happineſs, and *to turn back in our hearts into Egypt*; ſo that God may complain of us, as he does of his people Iſrael, that nothing that he could do, would bring them to conſideration, and make them better, neither his mercies nor his judgments. Iſa. i. 2. 3. *Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! for the Lord hath ſpoken: I have nouriſhed, and brought up children, but they have rebelled againſt me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib: but Iſrael doth not know; my people doth not conſider.* And ſo likewiſe he complains, that his judgments had no effect upon them; ver. 5. *Why ſhould ye be ſmitten any more? Ye will revolt more and more.* Well therefore may it be ſaid of us, as it was of them in the verſe before the text, *They are a nation void of knowledge, neither is there any underſtanding in them.* And the wiſh that follows in the text, is as ſeaſonable for us as it was for them, *O that they were wiſe, that they underſtood this, that they would conſider their latter end!*

And, by parity of reaſon, this may likewiſe be applied to particular perſons; and to perſuade every one of us to a ſerious conſideration of the final iſſue and conſequence of our actions, I will only offer theſe two arguments.

1. That conſideration is the proper act of reaſonable creatures, and that whereby we ſhew ourſelves men. So the Prophet intimates, Iſa. xlvi. 8. *Remember this, and ſhew yourſelves men; bring it again to mind, O ye tranſgreſſors!* That is, conſider it well, think of it again and again, ye that run on ſo furiouſly in a ſinful courſe, what the end and iſſue of theſe things will be. If ye do not do this, you do not ſhew yourſelves men, you do not act like reaſonable creatures, to whom it is peculiar to propoſe to themſelves ſome end and deſign of their actions; but rather, like *brute-creatures, which have no underſtanding*, and act only by a natural inſtinct, with-

without any consideration of the end of their actions, or of the means conducing to it.

2. Whether we consider it or not, our latter end will come; and all those dismal consequences of a sinful course, which God hath so plainly threatened, and our own consciences do so much dread, will certainly overtake us at last; and we cannot, by not thinking of these things, ever prevent or avoid them. Death will come, and after that the judgment, and an irreversible doom will pass upon us, according to all the evil that we have done, and all the good that we have neglected to do in this life, under the heavy weight and pressure whereof we must lie groaning and bewailing ourselves to everlasting ages.

God now exerciseth his mercy, and patience, and long-suffering towards us, in expectation of our amendment; he reprieves us on purpose that we may repent, and, in hopes that we will at last consider and grow wiser; for *he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*: but if we will trifle away this day of God's grace and patience, if we will not consider and bethink ourselves, there is another day that will certainly come, *that great and terrible day of the Lord, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.*

Seeing then all these things shall be, let us consider seriously *what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness, waiting for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God; To whom be glory now and for ever.*

The end of the Seventh Volume.